

NIGERIA'S ELUSIVE PEACE:  
HOW CULTURE INFLUENCES COUNTERINSURGENCY

BY

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## APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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## DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the United States Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.



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## ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to answer the primary research question of how Nigeria's culture influences its counterinsurgency (COIN) operations against Boko Haram. It analyzes Nigeria's history and explores its culture through the classical lenses of the government, the military, and the people. All three influence a nation's elite's decision-making with regard to COIN operations. The term strategic culture is used to encapsulate the influence these three groups have on Nigeria's leadership. The thesis then examines two additional case studies in Colombia and Sri Lanka and compares their COIN experiences with those of Nigeria to generate relevant recommendations.

In the three cases studied, the civilian government often had poor relations with its military, fearing a possible coup attempt. This mistrust causes civilian leaders to keep the military weak and makes it difficult for the military to respond to emerging threats. A corrupt and biased government normally favors one population group over another. The disaffected group rebels and forms an insurgency. These insurrections are often framed across ethnic, religious, or ideological lines but start from the security fears or economic dissatisfaction of the people.

Without popular trust a government likely cannot muster enough political will to protect the people in the face of a determined insurgency. Weak military forces overreact with harsh repression tactics, causing the insurgency to grow and the government to lose legitimacy. Thus, to fight an insurgency a government must identify and improve the specific cultural ideas that prevent it from building trust and legitimacy amongst the military and the people. Counterinsurgency success requires the will of all three groups to align.

Nigeria should work to improve the relationships between its government, military, and people to gain success against Boko Haram. This will not be an easy or quick process, but it is necessary. If Nigeria does not effectively deal with this threat, it could expand and have long-lasting consequences on its stability. Nigerian insecurity would negatively impact all of West Africa and United States interests there.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

*Our forces were vastly superior to the rebels. Then why couldn't we finish with them quickly?*

- David Galula, *Pacification in Algeria*

This study examines how culture influences the strategic decisions made by a nation's leadership. Specifically, it looks at the cultural aspects of Nigeria's counterinsurgency (COIN) efforts versus the radical Islamic movement Boko Haram. Operating in the predominately Muslim area of Northeastern Nigeria, Boko Haram has grown and become increasingly violent over the past six years, and is the cause of more than 13,000 deaths and over one and a half million refugees.<sup>1</sup> If Nigeria does not effectively deal with Boko Haram, this threat will have long-lasting consequences for the nation's security and stability and could, in turn, negatively impact all of West Africa and the United States' interests in the region.

Every nation has unique ways of responding to internal and external security threats, because each nation's culture is different. A population's shared history and experiences shape the way its political and military elites respond to any crisis by providing the context for their decision-making.<sup>2</sup> An academic term that defines the impact of collective national culture on elite decision-making is 'strategic culture.' Strategic culture encapsulates the aspects of broader culture that most influence how elites interpret national security and make decisions regarding the use of force.

The government, the military, and the people influence a nation's strategic culture. Many theorists have used these classic lenses to examine warfare. In his epic treatise *On War*, Clausewitz defines war generally as consisting of three parts: violence,

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<sup>1</sup> *Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insurgency* (Brussels, Belgium: International Crisis Group, 2014), <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/africa/west-africa/nigeria/216-curbing-violence-in-nigeria-ii-the-boko-haram-insurgency.pdf>. (1); Jeff Moore, "Boko Haram's Resiliency Spells Trouble for West Africa," *Small Wars Journal*, January 23, 2015, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/boko-haram's-resiliency-spells-trouble-for-west-africa>.

<sup>2</sup> Colin S. Gray, "Out of the Wilderness: Primetime for Strategic Culture" (Defense Threat Reduction Agency, October 31, 2006), 10.

chance, and reason. He describes, “The first of these three phases [lenses as used in this thesis] concerns more the people; the second more the general and his army; the third more the Government.”<sup>3</sup> A view of Nigeria’s tumultuous past through these lenses helps identify enduring cultural themes to include corruption and elite manipulation, coup proneness and military capability, and a lack of popular trust. Taken together, these themes characterize Nigeria’s strategic culture and shape Nigerian leadership’s response to Boko Haram.

The study compares these results with two other democracies, Columbia and Sri Lanka, to validate the themes and identify significant correlations. The goal is to provide useful recommendations for Nigeria’s COIN campaign. Additionally, other fragile nations may face similar insurgencies, and this study aims to help those nations enact successful COIN strategies based on an understanding of their individual cultures.

### **Research Question**

Does Nigeria’s culture influence its implementation of successful counterinsurgency operations?

### **Research Sub-questions**

How does Nigeria’s culture impact its leader’s decision-making?

What makes COIN operations successful?

Can this understanding help the Nigerian Government defeat Boko Haram?

### **Assumptions**

The first assumption of this thesis is that the Boko Haram uprising in North Nigeria is an insurgency. Many primary source news articles written in Nigeria support this assumption by using this specific term. The Wall Street Journal recently reported, “Boko Haram’s weekend seizure of a Nigerian army outpost that was to serve as a command center for combating the Islamist insurgency offers another measure of how fast the country’s military is losing ground and how multinational efforts have stalled.”<sup>4</sup> Additionally, both the *Economist* and the Nigerian newspaper, *Leadership*, have

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<sup>3</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), 89.

<sup>4</sup> Drew Hinshaw and Gbenga Akingbule, “Boko Haram Extends Its Grip in Nigeria,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 6, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/boko-haram-overruns-villages-and-army-base-in-northeast-nigeria-1420467667?KEYWORDS=Boko+Haram>.

identified the Boko Haram uprising as an effective insurgency bent on creating an Islamic caliphate in Northern Nigeria.<sup>5</sup>

Many scholars debate the difference between terrorism, insurgency, and civil war. Based on the current evidence, this thesis treats the Boko Haram threat as an indigenous insurgency seeking to break away and create an independently governed caliphate. The primary difference between terrorism and an insurgency is that terrorism targets the civilian population whereas an insurgency focuses on military targets. Boko Haram does both. It attacks the Nigerian military using Guerrilla tactics and uses terrorist tactics to isolate Nigerians in the northeast from the government. Due to the use of both types of tactics, this study uses the terms interchangeably at times and relies upon literature written on both insurgency and terrorism.

The second assumption, and an important part of the study, is that strategic culture is definable. This thesis uses Nigeria's history to outline the elements of its culture that affect the political and military elites' decision-making regarding its use of force against Boko Haram. The identified cultural themes in no way encapsulate the entirety of Nigeria's culture, but identify important contextual elements that may help explain how Nigeria's leaders make strategic decisions.

### **Relevance And Justification**

Nigeria is currently Africa's most populous country, and its population ranks as the eighth largest in the world. It is also the world's third largest democratic federal republic.<sup>6</sup> It is still considered the anchor that stabilizes West Africa. In the past, Nigeria has provided troops for many peacekeeping missions across Africa and acted as a stabilizing force in the region.<sup>7</sup> As Islamic extremism in Northeastern Nigeria spreads to neighboring countries, it will have serious consequences for the stability of all of sub-

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<sup>5</sup> "Nigeria's Islamist Insurgency: Unrest in the Home of Peace," *The Economist*, September 27, 2014, <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21620253-boko-haram-tightens-noose-unrest-home-peace>; News Agency of Nigeria, "Kwankwaso Calls For Support For Military To Win Insurgency," *Leadership Newspaper, Nigerian News from Leadership Newspapers*, (November 11, 2014), <http://leadership.ng/news/metro/390058/kwankwaso-calls-support-military-win-insurgency>.

<sup>6</sup> "World Fact Book: Nigeria," *Central Intelligence Agency*, April 10, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Hill, Jon, *Providing for National Security: A Comparative Analysis*, ed. Andrew M. Dorman and Joyce P. Kaufman (Stanford, California: Stanford Security Studies, an imprint of Stanford University Press, 2014), 225.

Saharan West Africa.<sup>8</sup> An Islamic caliphate established here would provide another large isolated safe-haven for terrorist training and create a severe refugee crisis due to Nigeria's large population.

An understanding of Nigeria's population and past instability indicators is required to understand how dangerous Boko Haram could become. The country is sharply divided by religion with 50 percent being Muslim in the North, 40 percent Christian in the South, and 10 percent other indigenous beliefs interspersed amongst the two. Nigeria's population is very young, as 44 percent of the population is under the age of 15.<sup>9</sup> Finally, Nigeria has significant oil wealth. Its proven reserves are over 37 billion barrels, and Nigeria is the eighth largest crude oil exporter in the world.<sup>10</sup> Despite this, 70 percent of Nigerians live below the poverty line on less than two dollars per day.<sup>11</sup>

Nigeria has also seen significant political unrest since its independence from British Colonial rule in 1960 including a civil war, multiple attempts at installing a democratically elected government, and seven military coups. All of these issues are major indicators of conflict, and Nigeria currently ranks as the 17<sup>th</sup> most fragile nation on the 2014 Fund for Peace's *Fragile States Index*.<sup>12</sup> Despite its democratic rebirth and transition to civilian leadership in 1999, Nigeria is still a fragile state; nonetheless it continues to be a pivotal state in the world. If Nigeria with its democracy and oil wealth cannot protect its moderate Muslims and overcome Boko Haram's version of radical Islam, it will set a dangerous precedent for the rest of the Muslim world.<sup>13</sup>

Nigeria's security is critical to the United States (US) due to its large easy-to-ship sweet crude oil reserves, and because a secure Nigeria provides an anchor for the rest of West Africa. "With its large population, ethnic tapestry, rich economic potential, diplomatic clout, and military strength, Nigeria remains an important regional power in

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<sup>8</sup> Peter Pham, "Boko Haram's Evolving Threat," *Africa Security Brief*, no. 20 (April 2012), 1.

<sup>9</sup> "World Fact Book: Nigeria."

<sup>10</sup> "World Fact Book: Nigeria."; Gerald McLoughlin and Clarence J. Bouchat, *Nigerian Unity: In the Balance*, Strategic Studies Institute (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Army War College, 2013). (3)

<sup>11</sup> James J. F. Forest, *Confronting the Terrorism of Boko Haram in Nigeria* (MacDill AFB, Florida: JSOU Press, 2012), 21.

<sup>12</sup> "The Failed States Index 2013," accessed October 4, 2014, <http://ffp.statesindex.org/rankings-2013-sortable>.

<sup>13</sup> Proquest, "Federal Republic of Nigeria," *Culture Grams*, 2015, [http://online.culturegrams.com.aufric.idm.oclc.org/world/world\\_country.php?contid=1&wmn=Africa&cid=115&cn=Nigeria](http://online.culturegrams.com.aufric.idm.oclc.org/world/world_country.php?contid=1&wmn=Africa&cid=115&cn=Nigeria).

Africa.”<sup>14</sup> Boko Haram’s expansion into Chad, Cameroon, and Niger signify its violence has the possibility of destabilizing most of West Africa.

The stakes are large for Nigeria, as the growing insurrection could lead to a general Islamic ‘Arab Spring’ type revolution sparking a civil war. Nigeria must delegitimize the insurgency, and this can only occur with an understanding of the insurgency’s roots and those of Nigeria itself. Only by looking to its past can Nigeria secure a lasting peace in the future.

### **Hypothesis**

The hypothesis of this thesis is that Nigeria has not engaged Boko Haram properly due to a lack of proper understanding and action from the top political decision-makers. Former President Olusegun Obasanjo claimed, “President Jonathan’s understanding of the Boko Haram phenomenon suffered from wrong reading and wrong imputation.”<sup>15</sup>

It also appears that Boko Haram’s views do not represent a majority of Nigeria’s Muslim population. Nigeria’s Islamic spiritual leader, Alhaji Sa’ad Abubakar, the Sultan of Sokoto, confirmed this by calling for an immediate end to the insurgency: “As Muslims, we must all stand and counter this violence that has dented the image of Islam.”<sup>16</sup> If true, it is difficult to understand who supports the insurgency. This thesis hypothesizes that an examination of Nigeria’s culture will help explain how Boko Haram gets its support. Boko Haram seems to take advantage of religious and economic fissures to delegitimize the Nigerian government and agitate discontent within the Muslim community.<sup>17</sup> The Boko Haram insurrection is not currently large enough to threaten the whole of Nigeria, but if the government reacts incorrectly, more Muslims could radicalize leading to a wider religious civil war.

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<sup>14</sup> Clarence J. Bouchat, *The Causes of Instability in Nigeria and Implications for the United States* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute U.S. Army War College Press, 2013), 3.

<sup>15</sup> Soni Daniel and Ikechukwu Nnochiri, “Why Jonathan Has Failed to Defeat B’Haram - OBJ,” *Vanguard News*, November 27, 2014, <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/11/jonathan-failed-defeat-bharam-obj/>.

<sup>16</sup> “Sultan of Sokoto Calls for End to Insurgency,” *Vanguard News*, January 8, 2015, <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/01/sultan-sokoto-calls-end-insurgency/>.

<sup>17</sup> Lauren Ploch, *Nigeria: Current Issues and U.S. Policy* (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, November 15, 2013), 12.



## Literature Review

Two bodies of previously written literature form the basis for this study: the literature on strategic culture and counterinsurgency operations. A brief literature review of each concept helps analyze their nexus and determine how they can help Nigeria defeat Boko Haram.

### Strategic Culture

Strategic culture, as an academic concept, was introduced in the 1970's but did not gain significant attention until late 1980. Harvard professor, Alistair Ian Johnston, published an *International Security* article in 1995 that illuminated the current academic development of the idea. He argues that both objective and subjective conditions influence a nation's strategic options.<sup>18</sup> Strategic culture attempts to categorize and account for the subjective conditions that affect strategic decision-making. The subjective conditions are important in Nigeria's case because the objective conditions give the overwhelming appearance that the government should have already achieved victory over Boko Haram.

Realist security experts argue that rational actors make security decisions based on ensuring the survival of their population.<sup>19</sup> A 'black box' rational actor model, however, does not seem to fit Nigeria's COIN decisions, and a cultural analysis may help explain why. Johnston expresses concern over the use of strategic culture over traditional realist thought, but he agrees that using it to determine how a country narrows its choices and ranks its preferences is useful.<sup>20</sup> This thesis does not reject realist rationality, but rather uses Nigeria's enduring cultural themes to help explain the seeming anomalies of Nigeria's choices in its campaign against Boko Haram.

Colin Gray argues in his book, *Modern Strategy*, "all strategic behavior is cultural behavior."<sup>21</sup> All decision makers grow up and are educated by unique societal standards, and this focuses their strategic views. Thus, history and cultural preferences provide the context for how these leaders make decisions. Gray notes, "Strategic culture can be

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<sup>18</sup> Alistair Ian Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," *International Security* 19, no. 4 (Spring 1995): 32–64, 34.

<sup>19</sup> Kenneth N Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2010), 91.

<sup>20</sup> Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," 35.

<sup>21</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 129.

conceived as a context out there that surrounds, and gives meaning to, strategic behavior.”<sup>22</sup>

The term strategic culture is used to encapsulate the cultural aspects that most influence the elites’ strategic decision-making. Johnston argues that many of these have defined strategic culture in a way that makes it untestable, and more work is required to provide a falsifiable definition.<sup>23</sup> Gray disagrees and says that strategic culture and behavior cannot be separated and, therefore, will always be untestable. Thus, cultural factors cannot predict behavior because so many other factors influence it. Agreeing with Gray, this thesis seeks to interpret the Nigerian COIN response rather than imposing direct casualty. A cultural understanding only exposes underlying decisional bias. It does not provide the sole reason as to why any individual decision is made.

Several authors argue that strategic culture only defines external decision-making, referring to it as political culture. Jeffery Lantis, a political science professor at The College of Wooster, addresses this and then melds this model together with Gray’s under the overall mantle of strategic culture. Like Gray, he argues that this concept applies to both internal and external decision-making. “Strategic cultural studies have provided rich descriptions of particularistic cultures and identities, and researchers have acknowledged important links between external and internal determinants of national security policy.”<sup>24</sup>

Finally, Russ Howard, an adjunct professor of Terrorism Studies and Senior Research Fellow at the Monterey Institute of International Studies defines strategic culture as “derived from a nation’s history, geography, and political culture, and represents the aggregate of attitudes and patterns of behavior employed by a nation’s most influential political and military elites.”<sup>25</sup> Thus, from national culture, patterns of behavior emerge that influence and limit strategic decision-making.

### **Counterinsurgency**

There are many published and unpublished theories of counterinsurgency. This thesis relies heavily on John Nagel’s book, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, to examine the effectiveness of Nigeria’s COIN execution. Nagl argues that there are two

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<sup>22</sup> Gray, *Modern Strategy*, 130.

<sup>23</sup> Johnston, “Thinking about Strategic Culture,” 33.

<sup>24</sup> Jeffrey S. Lantis, “Strategic Culture: From Clausewitz to Constructivism” (Washington D.C.: Defense Threat Reduction Agency, 2006), 13.

<sup>25</sup> Howard, *Strategic Culture*, 2.

main approaches to COIN: a strategy of military annihilation and/or a strategy focused on the loyalty of the population.<sup>26</sup> Annihilation lends itself to the military repressing an insurgency into non-existence by eliminating their capability to keep fighting. This method, while possible, is difficult.

Most counterinsurgency experts recommend the second method of gaining popular loyalty to remove support for the insurgency. David Galula, a noted French COIN theorist and soldier during the French-Algerian insurgency, maintains that gaining control of the population is the most effective COIN strategy.<sup>27</sup> Many aphorisms encapsulate this idea, such as winning the hearts and minds or using Mao's metaphor and separating the fish from the water.<sup>28</sup> The most important part of these strategies is the prominence of separating the population from the insurgents and convincing them to provide the intelligence required for further counterinsurgency operations.<sup>29</sup>

Stathis Kalyvas wrote about this process in his book, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Selective violence is normally required to achieve political objectives.<sup>30</sup> However, selective violence requires intelligence. Gaining intelligence on the insurgents requires the cooperation of the people amongst whom they hide. Gaining the cooperation of the people requires their trust. Gaining this trust requires the government to appear legitimate, and building legitimacy requires both empathy and protection from the military. Random violence breaks this trust, delegitimizes the government, and often results in the creation of more insurgents.

### **Key Definitions**

Boko Haram: "Boko Haram is the popular title for a group that calls itself Jama'at ahl al-sunna li-da'wa wa-l-qital, and it has operated in Nigeria since 2002-2003. Its popular name was derived from the Hausa language and connotes that '[Western] education is forbidden' or 'Western education is a sin' as a result of the perception that

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<sup>26</sup> John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, Paperback ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 26.

<sup>27</sup> David Galula, *Pacification in Algeria, 1956-1958*, xix.

<sup>28</sup> Zedong Mao, *On Guerrilla Warfare* (Baltimore, Md: Nautical & Aviation Pub. Co. of America, 1992), 113.

<sup>29</sup> Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, xiii.

<sup>30</sup> Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 143.

the group stood against any form of non-Islamic education or Westernization.”<sup>31</sup>

FARC: The Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia or Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) are a Marxist revolutionary insurgency located in Colombia.

LTTE: The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), also known as the Tamil Tigers, are now a defunct group, which fought a nationalist-separatist insurgency against their asserted oppressors the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka.

Insurgency / Insurrection: An act or instance of rising in arms of open rebellion against an established government.”<sup>32</sup>

Strategic Culture: As used in this thesis, a nation’s strategic culture is defined as the specific aspects of a nation’s broader culture that influence how top leaders make strategic decisions regarding the use of force in a given situation. This study attempts to identify the most relevant cultural themes that influence Nigeria’s counterinsurgency decision-making by using the lenses of the government, the military and the people.

## **Methodology**

This thesis studies history to determine the cultural themes that most influence the decision-making process of a nation’s elites with regards to counterinsurgency operations. These themes are subsumed within the term strategic culture. The thesis views national culture through the lenses of the government, the military, and the people to identify themes of a nation’s strategic culture that most affect its COIN operations.

The study first studies Nigeria and then presents two comparative case studies to determine if the identified themes of strategic culture are valid when compared against other nations. This thesis does not seek a causal linkage through this comparison. Rather the idea is to examine how different nations have achieved success or failure based on their unique pasts and strategic cultures. The author hopes the lessons learned from this comparison provide conclusions that help Nigeria and other countries implement successful counterinsurgency strategies.

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<sup>31</sup> David Cook, “The Rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria,” *West Point Combating Terrorism Center Sentinel* 4, no. 9 (September 2011): 3–5, 3.

<sup>32</sup> “Insurrection.” Merriam-Webster.com. Accessed January 10, 2015. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/insurrection>.

There are some limitations to this study. First, the scarcity of primary source material is concerning. The author is not an Africa expert and may not have accessed some important primary sources. Current Nigerian newspapers such as *Leadership* and the *allAfrica* news database were used to mitigate this limitation.<sup>33</sup> This thesis also uses recent secondary sources from international think tanks and non-governmental organizations with better access to primary material such as interviews.

Second, as already discussed, properly defining strategic culture is difficult. This paper melded many definitions of strategic culture to bind it properly and hopefully continue its development as a useful theoretical tool. However, it is understood that many other unaccounted for variables also impact Nigeria's decision-making process. Therefore, this thesis does not claim to provide a complete insight into Nigeria's culture nor provide a single solution to Nigeria's counterinsurgency problem. It simply seeks to highlight important leadership biases that appear to significantly affect Nigeria's successful employment of COIN operations. It focuses specifically on Nigeria, but provides a framework for using strategic culture to analyze any nation's COIN operations.

These limitations are noted here because the study's usefulness in developing a framework for describing a nation's strategic culture, and then applying it to COIN success makes overcoming all the limitations valuable.

## **Readership**

The objective of this work is to inform African specialists including those in United States African Command (AFRICOM), the State Department, the Intelligence Community, worldwide think tanks, and possibly Nigerian policy makers. Hopefully, the idea of tying a country's cultural influences to its application of a successful counterinsurgency campaign will have numerous applications outside of the three countries analyzed here. Thus, this work may hold interest for anyone interested in examining the cultural impacts of counterinsurgency methods in fragile or failed states.

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<sup>33</sup> "News Updates in Nigeria," *Nigerian News from Leadership News*, accessed January 10, 2015, <http://leadership.ng/>; "All Africa News Database," *allAfrica*, accessed January 10, 2015, <http://allafrica.com>.

## Chapter Organization And Summary

Chapter 1 lays out the problem and provides the justification, methodology, and definitions required to develop the thesis. Chapter 2 focuses on the history of the problem. This review of Nigeria's history is required to determine the main cultural themes that encompass Nigeria's strategic culture and their impact on its counterinsurgency operations. It reviews Nigeria's ethnic complexion, pre- and post-colonial periods, and the political-military environment.

Chapter 2 also presents the narrative of how Boko Haram emerged as a credible threat in Northern Nigeria. From moderate beginnings in 2002, this insurgent group has increasingly radicalized since 2009. It has now built an expanded power base allowing it to kill and displace thousands, capture heavy weaponry, and pledge allegiance to the Islamic State.<sup>34</sup>

Chapter 3 uses Nigeria's history to examine the most relevant features of its culture. It develops these behaviors and their intersections by using the lenses of the government, the military, and the people. This framework helps identify cultural themes. It then examines Nigeria's COIN employment using Robert Thompson's Five Principles of Counterinsurgency as taken from Nagl's, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*.<sup>35</sup>

Chapter 4 and 5 analyze two alternate cases of COIN warfare. The FARC insurgency in Colombia has not yet achieved success, while Sri Lanka successfully ended its insurgency in 2009. These case studies were chosen carefully to match elements of Nigeria's culture and COIN operations. The chapter analyzes these similarities and also uses Robert Thompson's Five Principles to show the results of each case study. This comparison provides perspective on Nigeria's current COIN operations.

Finally, Chapter 6 summarizes the finding of the case studies and examines and integrates the cultural themes of corruption and elite manipulation, coup proneness and military capability, and popular trust. The thesis uses these themes to provide recommendations for both Nigeria and the US to help defeat the Boko Haram insurgency. Finally, it recommends an avenue for future research.

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<sup>34</sup> "Nigeria's Boko Haram Pledges Allegiance to Islamic State," *BBC News*, March 7, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31784538>.

<sup>35</sup> John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, 29.



## Chapter 2

### Nigeria's History

*On insecurity, there is a genuine cause for worry, both within and outside Nigeria. Apart from the civil war era, at no other time in our history has Nigeria been this insecure.*

- Muhammadu Buhari, Chatham House Speech

Nigeria's history can be broken down into three generic periods: pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial. Nigeria's history began with the formation of indigenous groups as early as 9000 BCE. These groups did not show signs of political and religious governance until centralized city-states began to form, and nomads introduced Islam between 1000-1500 CE.<sup>1</sup> The arrival of the Europeans in 1450 CE began the next major period encompassing both the lucrative slave trade era and that of British colonialism.<sup>2</sup> The final period began when Nigeria gained its independence from Britain on October 1, 1960 and continues to the present-day.<sup>3</sup> This history briefly covers all three periods to identify their effect on the development of Nigeria's culture but focuses on the post-colonial period from 1960 to the present.

Nigeria's history began when its tribes formed autonomous city-states that conducted economic, political, and military interactions with each other.<sup>4</sup> This study concentrates on three primary regions and the tribes located there, because they continue to exert a large cultural influence in Nigeria. Only looking at the three major tribes is, of course, a gross simplification because Nigeria consists of more than 250 different ethnicities.<sup>5</sup> However, a detailed understanding of every tribe is not possible here, nor is it required to understand the basics of Nigerian tribal competition.

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<sup>1</sup> Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), xiii.

<sup>2</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, xiii.

<sup>3</sup> Frederick A.O. Schwarz, *Nigeria: The Tribes, the Nation, or the Race - The Politics of Independence* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1965), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Emmanuel Ike Udogu, *Nigeria and the Politics of Survival as a Nation-State*, *Studies in African Economic and Social Development*, v. 8 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Proquest, "Federal Republic of Nigeria," *Culture Grams*, 2015, [http://online.culturegrams.com.aufric.idm.oclc.org/world/world\\_country.php?contid=1&wmn=Africa&cid=115&cn=Nigeria](http://online.culturegrams.com.aufric.idm.oclc.org/world/world_country.php?contid=1&wmn=Africa&cid=115&cn=Nigeria), 2.

Geographical location divides the three primary tribes with the Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Igbo (Ibo) in the East, and the Yoruba in the West.<sup>6</sup> The Igbo and Yoruba split the southern half of modern day Nigeria, but most texts refer to their locations simply as east and west respectively. The general regions associated with these tribes are highlighted below in Figure 1. All three tribes existed well before the British created the modern state of Nigeria, and together they still claim “about 68 percent of the national population.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, Nigerians continue to identify themselves with their tribal lineages, which are the primary focus of their social organization.<sup>8</sup>



Figure 1. Map of Nigeria’s three primary ethnicities.  
Source: Blank map from CIA World Factbook, modified by author.

<sup>6</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 4.

<sup>7</sup> John N. Paden, *Faith and Politics in Nigeria: Nigeria as a Pivotal State in the Muslim World*, Pivotal States in the Muslim World (Washington, D.C: United States Institute Of Peace Press, 2008), 7.

<sup>8</sup> James S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1958), 32.



Prior to the arrival of the British, the Yoruba tribes formed themselves into a loose state with a constitutional monarchy. This tribal area was known as the kingdom of Oyo.<sup>9</sup> The Yoruba elected the Oni, or king, on a rotating basis from among the various clans, and this quasi-electoral system gave the king legitimacy.<sup>10</sup> This kingdom lasted until the 15th century when “European explorers and traders made contact with the Yoruba and Benin peoples and began a lucrative slave trade.”<sup>11</sup>

The Igbo tribe was the most isolated group. The Igbos organized themselves into small villages and leaders were chosen based upon their “perceived wisdom—a characteristic which was assumed corresponded and correlated with age and experience.”<sup>12</sup> It was the most politically decentralized group of the three, as each of the cities independently ran themselves. However, each village still considered itself Igbo, “based on a common language, similar religious beliefs, and various inter-group social institutions.”<sup>13</sup> This decentralization eventually made it more difficult for Europeans to spread religion in the region, so indigenous beliefs persist here.

In Northern Nigeria, several empires rose and fell prior to the emergence of states representing the Hausa and Fulani tribes. These two groups are often considered together because they are both nomadic traders that established trade routes across the Saharan desert.<sup>14</sup> Both tribes established a hierarchical system of governance based upon lineage. This system worked well with Islamic beliefs, and the Hausa were introduced to the religion through their trans-Saharan trade routes. “The first Hausa ruler to convert to Islam was Yaji of Kano, who adopted Islam in 1370.”<sup>15</sup> This connection to Islam gave the Hausa, and Fulani tribes more power initially and permanently changed Northern Nigerian society.

In 1804, an Islamic revolution initiated by Usman dan Fodio, a Fulani, overcame the historically Hausa regions of Northern Nigeria and created the Sokoto Caliphate. This caliphate spread Sunni Islamic beliefs among the people and consolidated the tribes under

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<sup>9</sup> Udogu, *Nigeria and the Politics of Survival as a Nation-State*, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Udogu, *Nigeria and the Politics of Survival as a Nation-State*, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Proquest, “Federal Republic of Nigeria,” 1.

<sup>12</sup> Udogu, *Nigeria and the Politics of Survival as a Nation-State*, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 22.

<sup>14</sup> Udogu, *Nigeria and the Politics of Survival as a Nation-State*, 3.

<sup>15</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 29.

Sharia law.<sup>16</sup> “The caliphate reached its peak when it eventually governed 30 Emirates from modern Burkina Faso to Cameroon in the mid-1800s.”<sup>17</sup>

This Islamic quasi-state still holds sway in the present day. “The key to understanding Islam in Nigeria is to recognize the central place of the Sokoto Caliphate, which serves as a framework or model even today.”<sup>18</sup> The creation of the Caliphate and the conversion of the Hausa and Fulani people explain why Islam is concentrated in Northern Nigeria where it claims 50 percent of the total national population.

The three tribes were already in place when Europeans arrived around 1500. From this time until mid-1800, the slave trade encouraged each tribe to consolidate power to protect itself and to steal slaves from the other tribes. The Yoruba Oyo monarchy gained in power by trading slaves for weapons with the Europeans. The Hausa-Fulani tribes also sold slaves across the Sahara. By 1800, the tribes “were heavily dependent on slavery and the slave trade for their political stability and economic wealth.”<sup>19</sup>

The British abolished their slave trade in 1807.<sup>20</sup> They promoted more legitimate forms of commerce and became heavily involved in Nigeria. In 1861, the British annexed parts of Southern Nigeria.<sup>21</sup> Then, in 1903, Britain expanded its reach into Northern Nigeria, conquering the Sokoto Caliphate and killing its Sultan.<sup>22</sup> The period of British colonialism officially began with the Berlin Conference of 1884-5 where European powers divided Africa into colonial zones. The British then further divided Nigeria into a Northern and a Southern Protectorate.<sup>23</sup>

These two largely different ethnic and religious regions operated as independent protectorates until amalgamated in 1914 primarily because of the First World War.<sup>24</sup> This colonial arrangement still haunts Nigeria. “The ‘birth’ of Nigeria could be at best termed ‘artificial,’ since the boundaries were not born out of physical, cultural, social, religious, economic, and environmental homogeneity, but conceived mainly as a geographical

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<sup>16</sup> Paden, Faith and Politics in Nigeria, 27.

<sup>17</sup> Christopher J Kinnan et al., *Failed State 2030: Nigeria-A Case Study* (Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama: Center for Strategy and Technology, Air War College, Air University, 2011), xiii, 10.

<sup>18</sup> Paden, Faith and Politics in Nigeria, 27.

<sup>19</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 60.

<sup>20</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 61.

<sup>21</sup> Udogu, *Nigeria and the Politics of Survival as a Nation-State*, 7.

<sup>22</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, xv.

<sup>23</sup> Udogu, *Nigeria and the Politics of Survival as a Nation-State*, 7.

<sup>24</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, xv.

organization for the economic expediency and administrative convenience of British imperialism.”<sup>25</sup>

During this period, the British followed a strategy of indirect control. Local tribal leaders were expected to be subservient to the British crown, but continued to rule and administer their tribal areas. This system allowed ethnic tensions between the major tribes to escalate during the colonial period.<sup>26</sup> “Two main facets of Nigeria’s history bear directly on its tenuous status as a functioning nation capable of effective governance—the British colonization of Nigeria and the spread of Islam.”<sup>27</sup> Nigeria’s multiple ethnicities and its mixed British and Islamic history, provide the cultural background for some of Nigeria’s present difficulties.

One difficulty is the religious divide. The British introduced Christianity to the Southern Protectorate, but the British high commissioner, Lord Lugard, excluded it from expanding into the Islamic areas.<sup>28</sup> “The missionaries, Christian Missionary Society and Roman Catholic Mission, were responsible for the introduction and dissemination of Western-styled education in Nigeria.”<sup>29</sup> Along with tribal differences, this further separated the North from the South, the British exposed southerners to western-style education, and not northerners. Further, the Muslims in the North were suspicious of western education corrupting their religious ideals.<sup>30</sup> These inequities of education and opportunity between tribes and religions persist today.<sup>31</sup>

This brief explanation of Nigeria’s colonial past explains how it became divided, almost evenly, between Christians in the South and Muslims in the North. The British system of indirect or divided control ensured that tribal loyalties dominated Nigerian politics leading up to independence.<sup>32</sup> Thus, British indirect control was actually direct, but was carried out by indigenous representatives. These regional Nigerian leaders rose in

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<sup>25</sup> Ebenezer O. Aka, *Regional Disparities in Nigeria’s Development: Lessons and Challenges for the 21st Century* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000), 114.

<sup>26</sup> Aka, *Regional Disparities in Nigeria’s Development*, 111, 117.

<sup>27</sup> Christopher J Kinnan et al., *Failed State 2030: Nigeria-A Case Study* (Maxwell AFB, Alabama: Center for Strategy and Technology, Air War College, Air University, 2011), 10.

<sup>28</sup> Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, 94.

<sup>29</sup> Aka, *Regional Disparities in Nigeria’s Development*, 119.

<sup>30</sup> Farouk Chothia, “Who Are Nigeria’s Boko Haram Islamists?,” *BBC News*, accessed February 23, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13809501>.

<sup>31</sup> Aka, *Regional Disparities in Nigeria’s Development*, 114.

<sup>32</sup> Aka, *Regional Disparities in Nigeria’s Development*, 130.

importance as Nigeria pushed for independence.

In 1950, which was a pivotal year in the constitutional development, the country witnessed the emergence of a major political association, the Action Group (AG). The AG, whose founding father was Chief Obafemi Awolowo, brought together Yoruba, Edo, Ishan and Istekiri elements of the Western region into the national political theater. The group was pitted against the dominant Ibos (who controlled the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC)) of the east and Hausa-Fulanis (who dominated the Northern People's Congress (NPC)) of the north for political power.<sup>33</sup>

As demonstrated by the statement above, each of the three major tribes developed a political party in addition to having a regional legislature and political leader.<sup>34</sup> In this political environment, each tribe had to fight the others for political dominance and control of resources. "Politics in Nigeria, from its inception during the Colonial Administration, has been manifested as a 'do or die' struggle among the various ethno-regional groups for sharing the wealth of the nation."<sup>35</sup> The ethnic and religious fissures of the pre-colonial period were intensified by British colonial rule and would continue after independence.

The modern period of Nigeria's history began when it gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1960.<sup>36</sup> At first, Nigeria remained a Commonwealth state, but it adopted a constitution in 1963, officially changed its name to the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and replaced the Queen with an elected President as head of State.<sup>37</sup> The transition from a colony to a republic was the beginning of the first of four republic eras with democratic elections. The years bounding the four identified republics are first republic 1963-66, second 1979-83, third 1993, and fourth 1999-present.<sup>38</sup> Each of these periods commenced with the election of a new civilian government and each, except for the current fourth republic, was ended by a military coup. Thus, between these republic periods military generals ruled Nigeria as dictators.

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<sup>33</sup> Udogu, *Nigeria and the Politics of Survival as a Nation-State*, 17.

<sup>34</sup> Julius Omozuanvbo Ihonvbere and Timothy M Shaw, *Illusions of Power: Nigeria in Transition* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1998), xxi.

<sup>35</sup> Aka, *Regional Disparities in Nigeria's Development* 117.

<sup>36</sup> Ihonvbere and Shaw, *Illusions of Power*, 31.

<sup>37</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, xvi.

<sup>38</sup> Peter Lewis et al., *Stabilizing Nigeria: Sanctions, Incentives, and Support for Civil Society*, Preventive Action Reports, v. 3 (New York: Century Foundation Press, 1998).

The first republic began with high expectations. Nigeria, then and still, the most populous country in Africa, was optimistic about the potential for economic growth. In addition to human capital, petroleum was discovered in Southern Nigeria in 1956.<sup>39</sup> Throughout the 1960's, Nigerians used these resources to gain economic independence from Britain by developing their industry and exports.<sup>40</sup> "The propitious economic environment was expected to contribute to the nurturing of a democratic tradition."<sup>41</sup>

Unfortunately, despite steady economic growth the parties continued to fight over the relative distribution of resources and power. Each party feared the others would enrich their region at the expense of the others in the classic political competition of who gets what.<sup>42</sup> This infighting destabilized Nigerian politics and eventually led to the first coup. This coup occurred on 15 January 1966 and was led by primarily Igbo and several Yoruba military officers.<sup>43</sup> The perpetrators did not view the coup as based upon ethnic grounds, but rather on unsuitable governance. They "castigated the civilian rulers for corruption, fraud, and arrogance. They transformed Nigeria from a federation into a unitary state and declared an intention to return to civilian rule."<sup>44</sup> Initially, most Nigerians welcomed the coup, but tribal insecurities soon took over, because of the perceived ethnic Igbo make-up of the original coup perpetrators.<sup>45</sup>

As the military consolidated power, many began to view the first coup as an Igbo power grab. On 29 July 1966 a counter-coup by military members from the Middle and North of the country, mostly northern Hausa-Fulani, retook the government.<sup>46</sup> They then killed or purged Igbos from the military's ranks.

Atrocities committed during the second coup, especially those directed at Igbos living in northern cities, aggravated ethnic tensions. In 1967, many Igbos retreated to their traditional homeland in eastern Nigeria, renamed it Biafra, and declared their independence. "Thus began a bitter civil war in which as many as two million lives were

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<sup>39</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, xvi.

<sup>40</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 163.

<sup>41</sup> Ihonvbere and Shaw, *Illusions of Power*, 33.

<sup>42</sup> Udogu, *Nigeria and the Politics of Survival as a Nation-State*, 34.

<sup>43</sup> Ihonvbere and Shaw, *Illusions of Power*, 51.; Udogu, *Nigeria and the Politics of Survival as a Nation-State*, 240.

<sup>44</sup> Lewis et al., *Stabilizing Nigeria*, 34.; Ihonvbere and Shaw, *Illusions of Power*, 51.

<sup>45</sup> Ihonvbere and Shaw, *Illusions of Power*, 49.

<sup>46</sup> Ihonvbere and Shaw, *Illusions of Power*, 59.

lost to war and famine”<sup>47</sup> Government inaction and corruption were at the heart of this tragic series of events, but the violence occurred along ethnic lines. Evidence suggests the initial coup was not an ethnic play, but the northerners viewed it as ethnic, causing simmering ethnic rifts to flare into violence.<sup>48</sup>

In 1970, the civil war ended when General Yakubu “Jack” Gowon emerged as the new military head of state.<sup>49</sup> Following the civil war, the Biafran Igbo were reintegrated into Nigeria, and the military began a decade of authoritarian rule. Initially, the military government promised to relinquish control and reduce corruption, but the oil boom of the 1970’s created a new system of political patronage amongst the military Generals. This newly discovered revenue created inflation problems decreased agricultural output and made the Nigerian economy dependent upon oil. “Petroleum has taken over modern Nigeria’s economy, rocketing from just 1 percent of GDP in 1960 to 26 percent in 1970. By 1976, oil dominated Nigeria's exports at 94 percent, remaining at 95 percent of foreign exchange earnings in 2011.”<sup>50</sup>

The military and political elites were now embezzling vast amounts of money while most Nigerians still lived in poverty, widening the wealth gap.<sup>51</sup> In an attempt to control these political and military elites and disperse political power, General Gowon divided the country into twelve states. Despite his efforts, the furor over growing inequality led Lt Col Musa Yar’adua to execute a bloodless coup in 1975.<sup>52</sup>

The Nigerian Army then chose General Murtala Muhammed as the new head of state, and he added another seven states again to diffuse political power.<sup>53</sup> The military assassinated Muhammed in another coup after only six months.<sup>54</sup> After his death, Muhammed’s chief of staff, Olusegun Obasanjo, a Yoruba Christian, took over.<sup>55</sup> Obasanjo initiated reforms of the government, expanded the economy, and moved the

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<sup>47</sup> Lewis et al., *Stabilizing Nigeria*, 35.

<sup>48</sup> Max Siollun, *Oil, Politics and Violence: Nigeria’s Military Coup Culture (1966-1976)* (New York: Algora Pub, 2009), 72-7.

<sup>49</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 174.

<sup>50</sup> Clarence J. Bouchat, *The Causes of Instability in Nigeria and Implications for the United States* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute U.S. Army War College Press, 2013), 8.

<sup>51</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 11, 202.

<sup>52</sup> Siollun, *Oil, Politics and Violence*, 179.

<sup>53</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 188.

<sup>54</sup> Siollun, *Oil, Politics and Violence*, 193.

<sup>55</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 188.



capital to Abuja. He then peacefully relinquished power to a newly elected civilian president in 1979 following the adoption of a U.S. like Constitution.<sup>56</sup> Obasanjo's efforts ushered in the second republic.

Despite Obasanjo's reforms, not much improved during the 1980's in terms of economic equality, and corruption increased dramatically with the reintroduction of civilian political parties. Nigerians typically voted along ethnic lines with multiple parties emerging to represent the tribal regions. The political elites would constantly change parties to increase their power and wealth, a practice that continues today.<sup>57</sup> "The claims on public resources multiplied as thousands of politicians and cronies sought favors and contracts or merely siphoned public funds to private accounts."<sup>58</sup> Then, as world oil prices dropped in the mid-1980's, the economy staggered while reckless spending continued.<sup>59</sup>

Many northern Nigerian's saw few options against persistent political corruption and elite manipulation that was leaving them behind their southern counterparts, so they turned to religious movements that promised a radical transformation."<sup>60</sup> Northern Muslims attempted to put Nigeria under Sharia law, but were unable to overcome Christian opposition, resulting in further unrest. In 1982, an Islamic movement appeared named the Maitatsine.<sup>61</sup> This group initiated violent riots in which 5,000 people died causing the government to ban it. It did not die out until mid-1980 showing the significant religious tensions that persisted beneath the surface of Nigerian society.

Elections occurred again in 1983, but the population largely viewed them as rigged in favor of the dominant party. This perception engendered widespread resentment for the corrupt wealthy political class, and by the end of 1983, it brought about yet another bloodless military coup that put Major General Muhammadu Buhari in charge.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Lewis et al., *Stabilizing Nigeria*, 38.

<sup>57</sup> Ihonvbere and Shaw, *Illusions of Power*, 96.

<sup>58</sup> Lewis et al., *Stabilizing Nigeria*, 40.

<sup>59</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 204.

<sup>60</sup> Peter Pham, "Boko Haram's Evolving Threat," *Africa Security Brief*, no. 20 (April 2012), 2.

<sup>61</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 206.

<sup>62</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 208.; Muhammadu Buhari, "Muhammadu Buhari: We Will Stop Boko Haram," *The New York Times*, April 14, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/15/opinion/muhammadu-buhari-we-will-stop-boko-haram.html>. Buhari was recently elected President of Nigeria. In this NYT OP-ED he promises to defeat Boko Haram. This is important to Nigeria and later in this thesis.

Military rule would continue for the next fifteen years. Each time a new military junta took power they would purge the political elites and then stabilize and secure the civilian population. However, these regimes were not successful economically and continued to mismanage Nigeria's vast oil wealth.<sup>63</sup> The patronage system led to large-scale spending and stealing with very little permanent public infrastructure to show for it. Initially, Buhari cracked down on this type corruption, which angered many elites who felt he betrayed them. After only 20 months, Major General Ibrahim Babangida, with the approval of other elites, took power from Buhari via a bloodless coup.<sup>64</sup>

Babangida held power from 1985 to 1993. "As head of state, he proved himself to be politically adept, mixing authoritarian repression with a feigned interest in public opinion."<sup>65</sup> He proclaimed he would relinquish power in 1989 and even reinstated the political party system. However, an aborted coup by junior officers in 1990 allowed him to consolidate power, conduct a violent purge of the military, and put plans for a peaceful transition on hold.<sup>66</sup> Finally, in 1993 he allowed the transition to a civilian government.

This transition, known as the third republic, lasted less than three months. The same corruption and political gerrymandering of the second republic also marked this election. In a very popular yet controversial vote, Nigeria elected Bashorun Abiola, a southern Christian Yoruba. Babangida, a northern Muslim, annulled this election, and many suspected it was due to ethnic reasons. Severe ethnic rioting forced Babangida to relinquish his office.

The voided election and Babangida's abdication in 1993 created a power vacuum that allowed the defense minister, General Sani Abacha to usurp power. However, Abacha would prove much more corrupt and tyrannical than Babangida. He "dissolved all democratic structures and in 1994 directly appointed military governors, who then selected local government officials."<sup>67</sup> He also arrested President-elect Abiola and inexplicably jailed him for treason.

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<sup>63</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 209.

<sup>64</sup> John Campbell, *Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 7.

<sup>65</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 216.

<sup>66</sup> Lewis et al., *Stabilizing Nigeria*, 40.

<sup>67</sup> Chris Kwaja, "Nigeria's Pernicious Drivers of Ethno-Religious Conflict," *Africa Security Brief*, no. 14 (July 2011), 4.



Abacha's government embarked on many damaging economic policies that garnered admonishment from the United States. "Abacha's government represented the most repressive rule in Nigerian history. The combination of centralized power, flagrant corruption, and blunt authoritarianism was unprecedented in Nigerian experience."<sup>68</sup> Even the former military ruler, Obasanjo, was openly critical of Abacha's rule. This defiance led to Obasanjo's arrest and a subsequent life sentence.

Abacha's reign came to a quick end when he died of a sudden heart attack in 1998.<sup>69</sup> After his death, investigators discovered that Abacha had accumulated over three billion US dollars by placing them in European banks during his time in office.<sup>70</sup> Military officials quickly named General Abdulsalami Abubakar as Abacha's successor to avoid significant violence.

Abubakar, the former defense minister, released all political prisoners, including Obasanjo and began yet another transition to civilian rule. This transition included reintroducing political parties. Three important parties emerged: the Alliance for Democracy (primarily a Yoruba party), the All People's Party (mostly Abacha loyalists), and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) with links to all the regions. The PDP announced that after being released from prison, former military leader Olusegun Obasanjo would be their presidential candidate.<sup>71</sup>

The fourth republic began in 1999 and has continued to the present day. This current civilian government has lasted through four elections. Nigerians elected Obasanjo as the first President of the fourth republic in 1999, and he served for two terms until 2007. "During his two terms in office, President Olusegun Obasanjo (1999–2007) shepherded the country through an era of economic growth, political reform, and transition to a new constitutional regime."<sup>72</sup> He then relinquished power after eight years, per the newly rewritten Nigerian constitution, and a new president was elected.

The newly elected President, Yar'Adua, was a northern Muslim because the PDP had an internal agreement to alternate the party nomination between a northern and

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<sup>68</sup> Lewis et al., *Stabilizing Nigeria*, 51.

<sup>69</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 234.

<sup>70</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 234.

<sup>71</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 234.

<sup>72</sup> Carl LeVan and Patrick Ukata, "Countries at the Crossroads: Nigeria" (Freedom House, January 21, 2014), accessed January 30, 2015, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/countries-crossroads/2012/nigeria#.Ut6JEf30CfQ>, 1.

southern candidate for each election cycle. However, Yar'Adua died in 2010 and his vice president, Goodluck Jonathon, was sworn in. Jonathon is a southern Christian. He served out Yar'Adua's term, but due to his ethnicity many influential PDP northerners decried his nomination in 2011 as a violation of the party's tacit agreement. Despite these northern reservations, Jonathon was reelected in 2011 in what was considered a mostly fair and free election.<sup>73</sup> However, the election was not without violence as up to 100 were killed following the announcement of the results.

Despite the efforts of two well-meaning Presidents, Nigeria does not seem to have escaped its cycle of political corruption. Nigeria's history shows that power still rests with the country's elites who have little incentive to distribute the nation's wealth evenly. "Despite some \$300 billion in export revenues since the discovery of oil in the late 1950's, seven of every ten Nigerian's live on less than \$1 a day."<sup>74</sup> It seems irrespective of whom leads Nigeria; the elites continue to get rich while the majority of people live in poverty. In many cases, the elites used ethnic and religious lines to maintain their power. Pervasive corruption, economic discontent, Nigeria's ethno-religious divisions, and a bulging youth population created room for ideological extremism.

### **Boko Haram**

Boko Haram is taking advantage of Nigeria's weaknesses to promote its goal of establishing a new Islamic Caliphate in Nigeria. In doing so, it poses a grave risk to Nigerian security.<sup>75</sup> "Boko Haram emerged in the early 2000s as a small Sunni Islamic sect advocating a strict interpretation and implementation of Islamic law for Nigeria. Calling itself Jama'a Ahl as-Sunna Li-da'wa wa-al Jihad (roughly translated from Arabic as 'People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad'), the group is more popularly known as Boko Haram (often translated as 'Western education is forbidden')."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Nate Haken, "After the Elections, Now the Hard Work Begins" (The Fund for Peace, May 3, 2011), accessed January 21, 2014, <http://library.fundforpeace.org/20110503-nigeria>.

<sup>74</sup> Karl Maier, *This House Has Fallen: Midnight in Nigeria* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), xxi.

<sup>75</sup> *Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insurgency* (Brussels, Belgium: International Crisis Group, 2014), <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/africa/west-africa/nigeria/216-curbing-violence-in-nigeria-ii-the-boko-haram-insurgency.pdf>, i.

<sup>76</sup> Lauren Ploch Blanchard, *Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions* (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, June 10, 2014), 2.

Boko Haram does not accept Nigeria's western traditions and sees the Sokoto Caliphate and other Muslims, who cooperate with the government, as pawns of the central government and ostensibly the West. Boko Haram's history of development is important to understand. "The emergence of the militant sect cannot be understood without reference to the social, religious, economic, and political milieu of Northern Nigeria. While it is murky, some accounts link the group's origins back to the Maitatsine uprisings of the early 1980s, which left thousands dead and cut a path of destruction across five Northern Nigerian states."<sup>77</sup> Its deep roots, attractive political message, and military strength make Boko Haram a formidable foe.

Boko Haram emerged in Northern Nigeria in 2002 under the control of Islamic cleric Mohammed Yusuf.<sup>78</sup> Initially, Yusuf tried to lobby the national government via non-violent means. He was successful in persuading some regional elites, including Ali Modu Sheriff, who was later elected the governor of Borno State, to allow his message.<sup>79</sup> The establishment of Sharia law in twelve northern states in 1999, however, did little to appease Yusuf, "who argued that the country's ruling class as a whole was marred by corruption and even Muslim northern leaders were irredeemably tainted by 'Western-style' ambitions."<sup>80</sup>

After the government largely ignored his peaceful entreaties, Yusuf used limited violence in 2003 to draw attention to his campaign. The Nigerian army repelled these limited attacks, and Yusuf, realizing his weakness, worked to consolidate his following by encouraging them to remain underground as the group gained strength. "After its initial 2003 attacks were repelled, Boko Haram followers regrouped at a base in Yobe State on the border with Niger, which they dubbed 'Afghanistan' after hoisting the Taliban flag over the encampment, although they had no links with their Afghan counterparts."<sup>81</sup> Thus, Boko Haram has also been referred to as the Nigerian Taliban.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Peter Pham, *The Ongoing Struggle Against Boko Haram* (Rayburn House Office Building: Atlantic Council, 2014), 2.

<sup>78</sup> Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II), ii.

<sup>79</sup> Pham, *The Ongoing Struggle Against Boko Haram*, 4.

<sup>80</sup> Pham, *The Ongoing Struggle Against Boko Haram*, 4.

<sup>81</sup> Pham, "Boko Haram's Evolving Threat," 2.

<sup>82</sup> David Smith and Monica Mark, "'Nigerian Taliban' Threat Prompts US Military Training," *The Guardian*, November 8, 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/nov/08/nigerian-taliban-us-boko-haram>.

During this period of relative calm, the group carried out periodic attacks on police stations, but largely had a truce with the government due to their underground involvement with Sheriff. “Yusuf was even able to establish a mosque and school in Borno State’s capital, Maiduguri.”<sup>83</sup> This truce ended abruptly in 2009 when a police raid on a Boko Haram safe house led to increasing violence.

Boko Haram executed reprisal attacks, and the police brutally repressed them leading to five days of rioting.<sup>84</sup> Government security forces raided the Maiduguri mosque in response. Over 700 people were killed, including Yusuf, who police initially captured and then killed while allegedly trying to escape.<sup>85</sup> Yusuf’s death, rather than destroying the movement, created a martyr spurring the next evolution of Boko Haram’s development.

Following the raid, it appeared that Boko Haram had disappeared, but its militants were seeking training elsewhere, likely from al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).<sup>86</sup> The leader of AQIM, Abdelmalek Droukdel, stated “his group would provide Boko Haram with weapons, training, and other support in order to expand its own reach into Sub-Saharan Africa in order not only to gain ‘strategic depth,’ but also to ‘defend Muslims in Nigeria and stop the advance of a minority of Crusaders.’”<sup>87</sup> By propagating al-Qaeda’s extreme Salafist beliefs, Boko Haram accepted a newly emerging and radicalized global doctrine.<sup>88</sup>

When Boko Haram resurfaced in 2010, it was taken over by Yusuf’s even more radical deputy named Abubakar bin Muhammad Shekau.<sup>89</sup> Shekau expanded attacks and linked Boko Haram’s struggle to global jihad efforts.<sup>90</sup> Since their reemergence in 2010, the group has accomplished several visible large-scale terrorist attacks including one on the United Nations building in Abuja and the kidnapping of approximately 270 girls from

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<sup>83</sup> Pham, “Boko Haram’s Evolving Threat,” 3.

<sup>84</sup> Pham, *The Ongoing Struggle Against Boko Haram*, 4.

<sup>85</sup> Pham, “Boko Haram’s Evolving Threat,” 4.

<sup>86</sup> Lauren Ploch, *Nigeria: Current Issues and U.S. Policy* (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, November 15, 2013), 15.

<sup>87</sup> Pham, *The Ongoing Struggle Against Boko Haram*, 4.

<sup>88</sup> Hill, Jon, *Providing for National Security: A Comparative Analysis*, ed. Andrew M. Dorman and Joyce P. Kaufman (Stanford, California: Stanford Security Studies, an imprint of Stanford University Press, 2014), 230.

<sup>89</sup> Pham, *The Ongoing Struggle Against Boko Haram*, 4.

<sup>90</sup> Pham, *The Ongoing Struggle Against Boko Haram*, 5.

Chibok.<sup>91</sup> These newly introduced tactics including Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIEDs) are hallmarks of al-Qaeda.<sup>92</sup>

Amidst the violence and rhetoric, Boko Haram has been difficult to understand. It was previously disjointed, but has recently coalesced and captured territory. “While Boko Haram’s declared political objective of replacing the Nigerian state with an Islamic polity ruled by Shari’a law is understood, little is known about the group’s current leaders or members.”<sup>93</sup> Some even define it as an “amorphous cloud” of Muslim grievances.<sup>94</sup> Despite its seemingly disjointed nature, Boko Haram has accomplished surprising military feats against the once powerful Nigerian military. “By the middle of 2013, the militants had effectively evicted Nigerian government troops and officials from at least ten local government areas along the borders of Niger, Chad, and Cameroon and set themselves up as the *de facto* authority in the region, replacing Nigerian flags with their own banner, taxing and otherwise ordering citizens about, and creating a large area within which they could operate with even greater impunity.”<sup>95</sup>

The militants command local loyalty based upon their anti-Western message and the fear they instill in the population through terror.<sup>96</sup> Many Nigerians blame the government for not effectively addressing the threat and for the military’s violent overreactions, like the 2009 Maiduguri raid. According to a Reuters article, one local said, “If it escalates it is the fault of the government and JTF (Joint Task Force). You

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<sup>91</sup> Patrick Meehan and Jackie Speier, “Boko Haram: Emerging Threat to the U.S. Homeland” (U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security: Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, November 30, 2011), 2.; Eline Gordts, “Why It Is Taking Nigeria So Long To Find The Missing Girls,” *The Huffington Post*, May 13, 2014, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/05/13/nigeria-missing-girls\\_n\\_5310215.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/05/13/nigeria-missing-girls_n_5310215.html).

<sup>92</sup> Robin Simcox, “Boko Haram and Defining the ‘Al-Qaeda Network,’” Opinion, *Aljazeera*, (June 6, 2014), <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/06/boko-haram-al-qaeda-201463115816142554.html>.

<sup>93</sup> Pham, “Boko Haram’s Evolving Threat,” 5.

<sup>94</sup> Meehan and Speier, “Boko Haram: Emerging Threat to the U.S. Homeland,” 7.

<sup>95</sup> Pham, *The Ongoing Struggle Against Boko Haram*, 7.

<sup>96</sup> “Boko Haram Launches Offensive on Nigeria’s Maiduguri,” *Al Jazeera America*, January 25, 2015, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/1/25/boko-haram-launches-offensive-on-nigerias-maiduguri.html>.; Caitlin Poling, “Despite Fading Attention, Boko Haram Remains Threat in Nigeria,” *US News & World Report*, September 12, 2014, <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/world-report/2014/09/12/despite-fading-attention-boko-haram-remains-threat-in-nigeria>.

can't have JTF searching your house, invading your privacy, mistreating people without you having sympathy for Boko Haram."<sup>97</sup>

Before the military started making its most recent gains in March 2015, Boko Haram controlled a large swath of territory the size of Belgium.<sup>98</sup> The insurgents have accomplished what counterinsurgency author David Kilcullen refers to as a sophisticated approach to violence. The terrorist tactics that Boko Haram uses are like those of al-Qaeda in Iraq that Kilcullen writes about in his book, *Out of the Mountains*. "The group cleverly established domination over the community through fear and a carefully engineered cycle of sectarian violence, intimidation, and revenge."<sup>99</sup>

According to escaping survivors, Boko Haram uses these same tactics including kidnapping girls, burning towns, and slitting the throats of those that dissent.<sup>100</sup> However, the trend up to January 2015 indicated that Boko Haram was mostly targeting Muslims.<sup>101</sup> Stathis Kalyvas accounts for this targeting anomaly by noting that there are differences between macro and micro-level level disputes. Nigeria's multi-ethnic culture and strong tribal and religious allegiances make it difficult to separate these social factors from politics. "Sets of diverse and occasionally overlapping regional and local cleavages, such as socioeconomic, factional, lineage, clan, tribal, gender, or age cleavages, combine to produce fluid (and even shifting) allegiances that may misleadingly appear to be uniform from a highly aggregate perspective; vertical relationships and ties (patron-client, community, neighborhood, parish, corporation, faction, clan, or kin) interact with, crosscut, and often trump "horizontal" nationwide cleavages such as class and ethnicity."<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Joe Brock, "In Nigeria's Northeast, Some Sympathy for Islamists," accessed December 23, 2014, <http://in.reuters.com/article/2011/11/14/idINIndia-60515120111114>.

<sup>98</sup> Drew Hinshaw, "Soldiers, Vigilantes Repel Boko Haram Attack on Key Nigerian City of Maiduguri," *Wall Street Journal*, February 1, 2015, sec. World, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/boko-haram-launches-new-assault-on-key-nigerian-city-of-maiduguri-1422784144?tesla=y>.

<sup>99</sup> David Kilcullen, *Out of the Mountains: The Coming Age of the Urban Guerrilla* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 139.

<sup>100</sup> "Boko Haram Launches Offensive on Nigeria's Maiduguri."

<sup>101</sup> Drew Hinshaw and Gbenga Akingbule, "Boko Haram Extends Its Grip in Nigeria," *Wall Street Journal*, January 6, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/boko-haram-overruns-villages-and-army-base-in-northeast-nigeria-1420467667?KEYWORDS=Boko+Haram>.

<sup>102</sup> Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 370.



Boko Haram uses local level terror, even killing Muslim clerics who speak out against them, to control the population. “Boko Haram recently murdered the brother of the Shehu of Borno, the preeminent Islamic traditional ruler in Maiduguri, as well as a number of local government officials.”<sup>103</sup> Their terrorist tactics have served a strategic purpose in allowing them to gain control of large parts of Borno state.<sup>104</sup> The insurgents are thinking both tactically and strategically making it difficult to combat them only at the local level.

Boko Haram gains support on a national and global level by strategically creating the illusion of a macro-level dispute between all Muslims and the legitimate Nigerian government. According to Monica Toft, an ethnic and religious expert and professor of International Relations at Oxford’s Blavatnik School of Government, Islamic elites and fighters often use this strategy to gain legitimacy and followers. She calls this process religious outbidding and claims it is why “Islam was involved in a disproportionately high number of civil wars compared with other religions.”<sup>105</sup>

In theory, this explains how Boko Haram gains from their recent, March 2015, pledge of allegiance to the Islamic State.<sup>106</sup> It is unknown if this pledge is mostly to generate propaganda or if the two groups are indeed working together. Theoretically, this arrangement may give Boko Haram access to funding, training, and material that it might not get otherwise. This relationship supports Toft’s theory and may allow Boko Haram to transform itself from a relatively closed system into an open system in the global environment. This change would make them much more difficult to defeat.

Unfortunately in the case of Boko Haram, this strategy is working. Boko Haram is working with the Islamic State, but they have worked with AQIM in the past, and get most of their funding through kidnappings.<sup>107</sup> They steal weapons and material from

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<sup>103</sup> John Campbell, “To Battle Nigeria’s Boko Haram, Put Down Your Guns,” *Foreign Affairs*, September 9, 2011, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/68249/john-campbell/to-battle-nigerias-boko-haram-put-down-your-guns>.

<sup>104</sup> Jeff Moore, “Boko Haram’s Resiliency Spells Trouble for West Africa,” *Small Wars Journal*, January 23, 2015, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/boko-haram’s-resiliency-spells-trouble-for-west-africa>.

<sup>105</sup> Monica Duffy Toft, “Getting Religion?: The Puzzling Case of Islam and Civil War,” *MIT Press* 31, no. 4 (Spring 2007): 97–131, 105.

<sup>106</sup> “ISIS Accepts Boko Haram’s Allegiance Pledge,” *Fox News*, March 13, 2015, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2015/03/12/isis-accepts-boko-haram-allegiance-pledge/>.

<sup>107</sup> Peter Pham, “Africa’s Islamic State?,” *Atlantic Council*, September 8, 2014, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/africasource/africa-s-islamic-state.>; Terrence McCoy, “This Is How

overpowered police or Army stations.<sup>108</sup> This includes small arms left behind by fleeing soldiers and even large military vehicles. The Nigerian National Security Advisor, Sambo Dasuki, admitted that Boko Haram stole “six of our APCs - or armoured vehicles - all of them with 4,000 rounds of ammunition inside.”<sup>109</sup>

Finally, Boko Haram recruits new young soldiers through ideology and terror. Nigeria’s large youth bulge is partly responsible. Many youths are co-opted through ideological appeal because they are discontent with their lives.<sup>110</sup> Kalyvas gives a similar example of child soldiers in Sierra Leone. “Many child soldiers in Sierra Leone made a conscious choice to participate in the war, having grown up in a world of ‘destroyed families and failed educational systems’ where only war appears to offer opportunities.”<sup>111</sup> Boko Haram also kidnaps and enslaves children against their will, and has released videos of training them to fight.<sup>112</sup>

Boko Haram gains legitimacy and recruits by criticizing government corruption, and using the same manipulation tools that Nigerian elites have used for years. Like Kilcullen’s insurgents, “they sent a message of consistency, predictability, and order, by which they distinguished themselves from corrupt officials.”<sup>113</sup> Despite their seeming brutality, Boko Haram is running a solid insurgency strategy. “Theology is only one dimension of ISIS and Boko Haram, along with alienated youth, economic depression, and predatory states.”<sup>114</sup>

Boko Haram is using all of these dimensions and more. It has shown itself to be a resilient insurgent group. “Boko Haram is said to have between 4,000-6,000 fighters, according to a US intelligence report. The insurgents themselves estimate their forces at

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Boko Haram Funds Its Evil,” *The Washington Post*, June 6, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/06/06/this-is-how-boko-haram-funds-its-evil/>.

<sup>108</sup> “Boko Haram Crisis: Is the Nigerian Army Failing?,” *BBC News*, February 4, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31046809>.

<sup>109</sup> Thomas Fessy, “Boko Haram Attack: What Happened in Baga?,” *BBC News*, February 2, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-30987043>.

<sup>110</sup> Saeed Ahmed, “Boko Haram Leader Abubakar Shekau: A Ruthless Leader with a Twisted Ideology,” *CNN*, May 7, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/05/07/world/africa/abubakar-shekau-profile/index.html>.

<sup>111</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 58.

<sup>112</sup> Caleb Weiss, “Boko Haram Releases Photos Showing Children in Training,” *The Long War Journal*, *Threat Matrix*, (January 25, 2015), [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/01/boko\\_haram\\_releases\\_photos\\_sho.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/01/boko_haram_releases_photos_sho.php).

<sup>113</sup> Kilcullen, *Out of the Mountains*, 123.

<sup>114</sup> John Campbell, “ISIS and Boko Haram,” *Council on Foreign Relations - Africa in Transition*, February 24, 2015, <http://blogs.cfr.org/campbell/2015/02/24/isis-and-boko-haram/>.



30,000.”<sup>115</sup> The actual number of troops is important because currently Nigerian troops number 15,000 and are having a difficult time enacting a proper counterinsurgency strategy.<sup>116</sup>

In 2015, Boko Haram continues to expand its goals and reach. Boko Haram operates from the Sambisa forest on the Cameroon border. Along with controlling territory, Boko Haram has stepped up suicide attacks on those that oppose them. In September of 2014, they targeted a prominent northern Islamic cleric, Sheikh Dahiru Bauchi along with Muhammadu Buhari the opposition leader, former military leader, and recently elected president of Nigeria, in separate attacks that killed 42 people.<sup>117</sup>

Boko Haram targets civilians including other Muslims, but their message is still attractive because of the abject poverty in Northern Nigeria.<sup>118</sup> Many young men have few opportunities besides joining the insurgency. Nigeria’s cultural schisms and government corruption have created a perfect environment for this insurrection. Goodluck Jonathan has done little to mitigate these issues choosing instead to use the poorly trained military to enforce order. Military and police abuses of power often make the situation worse as troops escalate violence and violate human rights.

Nigeria’s history shows that a diverse polity developed into multiple tribes across many centuries. British colonialism accentuated tribal differences by introducing Christianity and Western education in the South, and by allowing each tribe to manage itself through indirect rule. The British then amalgamated these different tribes into one Nigeria to serve their interests.

Upon independence, these tribes entered into a competition. Nigeria’s discovery of petroleum heightened this competition. Elites worked to gain and maintain power to ensure their tribe got enough resources and leveraged ethnic and religious factions to gain

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<sup>115</sup> Yemi Adebawale and Senator Iroegbu, “Nigeria: Real Battle to Dislodge Boko Haram Begins in March,” *This Day*, February 21, 2015, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201502231874.html>.

<sup>116</sup> Eleanor Whitehead, “No Solution to Boko Haram from Nigeria’s Army,” Opinion, *Business Day Live*, (February 23, 2015), <http://www.bdlive.co.za/opinion/2015/02/23/no-solution-to-boko-haram-from-nigerias-army>.

<sup>117</sup> “Muhammadu Buhari And Sheik Dahiru Bauchi As Targets And What It May Mean,” *Sahara Reporters*, July 28, 2014, <http://saharareporters.com/2014/07/28/muhammadu-buhari-and-sheik-dahiru-bauchi-targets-and-what-it-may-mean-nlc>.

<sup>118</sup> Brock, “In Nigeria’s Northeast, Some Sympathy for Islamists.”

political advantage. This history led to a political patronage system based primarily on corruption and elite manipulation.

In many cases, the military reacted to corruption by staging a coup. Political-economic concerns often formed the basis for these coups, but they were portrayed as being ethnically based. The numerous coups caused the political elite to not trust or give much power to the military; it also caused suspicion between the tribes. Endemic corruption and mistrust have led to a weakened less impactful military during the current fourth republic.

The discovery of petroleum also hurt Nigeria because it turned it into a “rentier state,” also known as Dutch disease.<sup>119</sup> The political elite became dependent upon foreign oil markets for income rather than domestic agriculture or industry. Since the Nigerian Government is more dependent upon oil sales than taxes to generate money, it has had scant political will to act in the best interests of its citizenry.<sup>120</sup> Instead, the elites manipulate the population to ensure their own enrichment. The practice of political patronage distances civilian leaders from the military and in extreme cases causes a coup. The interaction of these three ongoing themes of Nigeria’s culture, as derived from its history, influence elite decision-making, and hence, its strategic culture. This thesis develops these themes and their connections further in Chapter 3.

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<sup>119</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 11.

<sup>120</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 11.

## Chapter 3

### Nigeria's Strategic Culture and COIN Execution

*Ubiquitous patronage and corrupt behavior fueled by oil money is a root cause of Nigeria's political and economic sclerosis.*

- John Campbell, former US Ambassador to Nigeria

The historical examination performed in Chapter 2 identifies several cultural trends that form Nigeria's strategic culture. These trends are examined through the framework of the government, the military, and the people. This chapter develops important themes and their interaction using this framework and then shows how they affect its implementation of a successful COIN strategy.

#### Nigeria's Strategic Culture

As described in Chapter 1, a nation's strategic culture represents "the aggregate patterns of behavior employed by a nation's most influential political and military elites."<sup>1</sup> These behaviors shape the way a nation's influential decision makers view and implement force. This thesis focuses on Nigeria's internal use of force against the insurgent group Boko Haram.

The review of Nigeria's four republics and subsequent military coups show that military and civilian elites do not always share the same views on governance within a nation, but both groups can significantly affect it. The political will to engage in any action is also decided by the type of regime in power, and to whom it owes its loyalties. For example, a southern president is more likely to engage and distribute additional resources in the South and vice-versa.<sup>2</sup> Peter Feaver in his work, *Armed Servants*, sets forward a definition of politics as deciding, "who gets what and how."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Russell D. Howard, *Strategic Culture* (MacDill AFB, Florida: Joint Strategic Operations University, 2013), [https://jsou.socom.mil/JSOU%20Publications/13-8\\_Howard\\_Strategic\\_Culture\\_FINAL.pdf](https://jsou.socom.mil/JSOU%20Publications/13-8_Howard_Strategic_Culture_FINAL.pdf), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ebenezer O. Aka, *Regional Disparities in Nigeria's Development: Lessons and Challenges for the 21st Century* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000), 114.

<sup>3</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 11.

## The Government

Nigeria's government is still a reflection of the political patrimony system the British initially set in place by instituting the idea of indirect colonial rule. This system allowed certain ethnic groups, as chosen by the British Governor, to rule using their native governing systems. "Nigerians' native governing systems and the British attempt to govern through them failed, damaging discourse within the political economy."<sup>4</sup>

This system, which encouraged some Nigerian's to rule over others, established an expectation of elitism and competition between tribes that continues today.<sup>5</sup> One local's summarization of the upcoming elections in 2015 indicates Nigerians largely accept this system of elite politics. "It matters pretty little who wins the elections next month. Years of political brinkmanship, reprehensible military dictatorship, corruption and irresponsible leadership have served to make nonsense of the true meaning of nationhood in Nigeria."<sup>6</sup>

The election may not matter to most Nigerians, but due to the long-standing system of patronage it is critical for the elites because the winner chooses how resources get distributed among them. This pervasive patrimony system creates the basis for elite competition that many describe as a "do-or-die struggle" in Nigeria.<sup>7</sup> Competition between elites quickly devolves into corruption and often centers on tribal allegiances and corrupt remittances.

Nigeria ranks poorly, 136 out of 175 countries, on Transparency International's 2014 corruption index.<sup>8</sup> Human Rights Watch describes the political patronage system this way; "Since 1999, elections have been stolen more often than won, and many politicians owe their illicitly-obtained offices to political sponsors who demand financial 'returns' that can only be raised through corruption."<sup>9</sup> Political patronage creates a two-

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<sup>4</sup> Clarence J. Bouchat, *The Causes of Instability in Nigeria and Implications for the United States* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute U.S. Army War College Press, 2013), 53.

<sup>5</sup> Bouchat, *The Causes of Instability in Nigeria and Implications for the United States*, 52.

<sup>6</sup> Chido Onumah, "Nigeria: 2015 Elections - It Is an Easy Choice Before Nigerians," *Pambazuka News*, January 22, 2015, sec. Opinion, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201501262592.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Onumah, "Nigeria: 2015 Elections."

<sup>8</sup> "Corruption Perceptions Index: 2014," *Transparency International*, 2015, <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2014/infographic>.

<sup>9</sup> Chris Albin-Lackey, *Nigeria: Corruption on Trial?: The Record of Nigeria's Economic and Financial Crimes Commission* (New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2011), <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2011/08/25/corruption-trial-0>, 26.

way system where elites and the population each expect the others support via legal and extralegal measures.

The multi-polarity of Nigeria's population, however, makes it difficult for any one group to dominate in Nigeria, especially since democratization in 1999. These divisions lead to the requirement for elite manipulation of the larger population, and this requirement has had positive and negative results in Nigeria. A positive outcome is that one candidate from the North and one from the South ran on a combined ticket for president and vice-president to create more legitimacy.<sup>10</sup>

The most negative result is the increasing use of money as a method of influence. Nigeria's great poverty makes this method very effective.<sup>11</sup> Henry Alapiki, a senior Political Science lecturer at the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria, contends that Nigerian politics depends upon these patron-client relationships. "The scenario is such that ruling parties and governments at all levels make it possible for their members to retain their clients by a judicious allocation to their constituencies of public service appointments, government projects, and resources."<sup>12</sup> State Governors are often promised positions in the government or enriching projects for their states if they encourage their populations to vote a certain way or in some cases even rig the ballot boxes.<sup>13</sup>

Obviously, using money and political positioning as methods of political control eventually leads to corruption in political regimes, but corruption is so clear and rampant in Nigerian society that it has become foundational to their political culture. "Graft has fueled political violence, denied millions of Nigerians access to even the most basic health and education services, and reinforced police abuses and other widespread patterns of human rights violations."<sup>14</sup>

The above problems all have their roots in corruption, but the highly developed system of elite manipulation requires graft to function, so it is difficult to eliminate. The political elites will not easily move away from corruption because it helps them remain in

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<sup>10</sup> John N. Paden, *Faith and Politics in Nigeria: Nigeria as a Pivotal State in the Muslim World*, Pivotal States in the Muslim World (Washington, D.C: United States Institute Of Peace Press, 2008), 88-90.

<sup>11</sup> Paden, *Faith and Politics in Nigeria*, 13.

<sup>12</sup> Henry E. Alapiki, "State Creation in Nigeria: Failed Approaches to National Integration and Local Autonomy," *African Studies Review* 48, no. 3 (December 2005): 49-65, 52.

<sup>13</sup> *Lessons from Nigeria's 2011 Elections*, Africa Briefing No. 81 (Abuja/Dakar/Brussels: International Crisis Group, September 15, 2011), 1.

<sup>14</sup> Albin-Lackey, *Nigeria: Corruption on Trial?*, 1.

power.<sup>15</sup> The intractability of the problem creates a situation of helplessness within the population. The people see no hope in overcoming official graft and simply join in. They do this by using ethno-religious identifications and letting their designated elites take care of them.

Each tribe tries to ensure their candidate remains in power for later favors. Former US Ambassador to Nigeria John Campbell highlights this political trafficking. “An office holder in Nigeria is under obligation to share his good fortune with his kith and kin—‘preferably through contracts, appointments, and jobs.’”<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, this trend has only increased since the initiation of the fourth republic. “In particular, communal, ethnic, and ethno-religious polarization and mobilization have increased since democratization opened up political space in May 1999.”<sup>17</sup>

### **The Military**

Nigeria’s history affects the tenuous principle-agent relationship between its civilian and military elites. Peter Feaver generalizes the interactions of these two groups writing: “The essence of civil-military relations is a strategic interaction between civilian principles and military agents.”<sup>18</sup> Feaver then sets out two extremes that each nation must guard against, “battlefield collapse and coup.”<sup>19</sup> Nigerians have long struggled to reach a balance between these two extremes. A strong military represents a coup risk, so civilian leaders often decide to keep it weak, but still expect it to protect the nation.<sup>20</sup> Both of these extremes influence strategic decision-making.

Thus, military impact describes Nigeria’s search for a balance between civilian and military power and how this affects military readiness. The coup is an extreme way for the military to gain control of power. Then, once civilians regain power, they purge the military to make future coups more difficult, which in turn impacts the military’s

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<sup>15</sup> *Nigeria’s Faltering Federal Experiment*, Africa Report No. 119 (Dakar/Brussels: International Crisis Group, October 25, 2006), 15.

<sup>16</sup> John Campbell, “Corruption and ‘Sharing Nigeria’s Cake,’” *Council on Foreign Relations - Africa in Transition*, December 19, 2014, <http://blogs.cfr.org/campbell/2014/12/19/corruption-and-sharing-nigerias-cake/>.

<sup>17</sup> Austine Ikelegbe, “State, Ethnic Militias, and Conflict in Nigeria,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 39, no. 3 (2005): 490–516, 490.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>19</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 6-7.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Pizzi, “Nigeria’s Undersized, Undertrained Military under Fire,” *Al Jazeera America*, May 10, 2014, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/5/10/nigeria-militaryfailure.html>.



effectiveness. These problems recur enough throughout Nigeria's history to become part of its culture.

During the period from 1963-1999 Nigeria experienced seven military coups and constant civil unrest.<sup>21</sup> The military has perpetrated each coup for slightly different reasons, but they are all a reaction to governmental inaction and corruption. Initially, the military Generals who initiate coups against the government appear to be anti-corruption. They revolt because they see federal leadership as lacking and unable to control civic unrest or as completely corrupt. Once these coups happen, however, the Generals often continue and in some cases exacerbate the political patronage process.

The continued reemergence of past military leaders points to a trend of elite longevity. Repeatedly, the prominent elites rise to power by leveraging or manipulating the population in some manner. Once back in power these leaders continue the cycle of patronage by helping those who helped them. Two prominent military leaders who have reemerged as politicians during the fourth republic are Olusegun Obasanjo and Muhammadu Buhari. Nigerians recently elected Buhari over Jonathan in March 2015. He competed as the figurehead of the opposition party, the All Progressive Congress (APC) but lost in the 2007 and 2011 elections.<sup>22</sup>

Obasanjo, the first President, elected during the fourth republic, also has a long history. He took over as a military ruler in 1976, following General Murtala Mohammed's death in an aborted coup.<sup>23</sup> Obasanjo then abdicated in 1979 to a civilian government.<sup>24</sup> Military leader Sani Abacha jailed Obasanjo in 1995 for planning a subsequent military coup against him.<sup>25</sup> Thus, Obasanjo widely understood the threat the military could pose when he took over via a democratic election in 1999 and wanted to keep the military weak for this reason.<sup>26</sup> Nigeria's history of military coups continues to

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<sup>21</sup> Lewis et al., *Stabilizing Nigeria*, 34.

<sup>22</sup> Susannah Cullinane and Stephanie Busari, "Who Is Nigeria's Muhammadu Buhari?," *CNN*, March 31, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/03/31/africa/nigeria-muhammadu-buhari/index.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 188.

<sup>24</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 198.

<sup>25</sup> Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 230.

<sup>26</sup> Tim Cocks, "Boko Haram Exploits Nigeria's Slow Military Decline," *Reuters*, May 9, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/09/us-nigeria-military-insight-idUSBREA4809220140509>; Obi Nwakanma, "We Are All Boko Haram," *Vanguard (Lagos)*, November 16, 2014,

encourage a perverse incentive for civilian leaders to keep the military from gaining too much power and influence.

They accomplish this by reducing the money available to the military, which negatively affects training and equipment. Leaders at all levels siphon off money allocated to the military.<sup>27</sup> Political elites allow this to happen to buy the allegiance of military elites and further minimize the risk of a coup. “In 2014 security will swallow nearly 938 billion naira (\$5.8 billion [USD]), a quarter of the federal budget. Of that, the defense ministry will take more than a third, but only 10 percent is for capital spending.”<sup>28</sup> These aspects of Nigeria’s strategic culture are important to the execution of a COIN strategy. During Goodluck Jonathan’s time in power, many felt he intentionally neglected the North and focused more on developing the South.<sup>29</sup>

This neglect along with many missions has over-stretched Nigeria’s army. A prominent Nigerian businessman, Kayode Akindele, illustrates this point. “Nigeria’s army faces a litany of problems and its forces are spread too thin fighting them. Although about 100,000 serve in the military, its priorities are divided between fighting Islamist insurgents in the North, controlling militancy and oil theft in the Niger Delta, and calming tribal conflict in the middle-belt.”<sup>30</sup>

Overstretch is not the only problem for Nigeria’s Army. The same rampant corruption evidenced in Nigeria’s political process also affects the Army. According to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the military is properly funded. In 2013, Nigeria spent over \$2 billion USD on defense.<sup>31</sup> Not all of this money, however, is used properly. Money is often directed in accordance with political party leanings. The lack of much oversight leads to misappropriated funds.<sup>32</sup>

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<http://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/11/boko-haram-4/>. This article presents a unique look at the Presidencies of Obasanjo and Jonathon.

<sup>27</sup> Eleanor Whitehead, “No Solution to Boko Haram from Nigeria’s Army,” Opinion, *Business Day Live*, (February 23, 2015), <http://www.bdlive.co.za/opinion/2015/02/23/no-solution-to-boko-haram-from-nigerias-army>.

<sup>28</sup> Cocks, “Boko Haram Exploits Nigeria’s Slow Military Decline.”

<sup>29</sup> Caitlin Poling, “Despite Fading Attention, Boko Haram Remains Threat in Nigeria,” *US News & World Report*, September 12, 2014, <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/world-report/2014/09/12/despite-fading-attention-boko-haram-remains-threat-in-nigeria>.

<sup>30</sup> Whitehead, “No Solution to Boko Haram from Nigeria’s Army.”

<sup>31</sup> “SIPRI Military Expenditure Database,” *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, accessed April 22, 2015, [http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex\\_database](http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database).

<sup>32</sup> Whitehead, “No Solution to Boko Haram from Nigeria’s Army.”



The Nigerian military was once one of the strongest in Africa, but years of neglect have affected its readiness. Nigerian Col Abubakar Dangiwa Umar maintains the issues trace back to “dubious recruitment method, poor training and equipment, lack of motivation and deployment of soldiers to purely police duty like checkpoints at which they are seen soliciting and receiving bribe.”<sup>33</sup> Some Soldiers defend this practice claiming the government is simply not paying them. Many others have deserted in the face of Boko Haram, leaving their weapons behind them.<sup>34</sup>

Despite the fact that Nigeria spends twenty-five percent of its Gross National Product on the military, it currently looks incapable of dealing with this threat. Neither the political nor military elites have paid enough attention to the growing problem. The 2015 elections, however, focused attention on this issue, but before then there was little political will to engage and this eroded popular trust in the North.

### **The People**

Nigerian elites make choices based on what will keep them in power and please their supporting constituencies. The population they serve affects a leader’s will to engage. In Nigeria, this support is split vertically based on tribal, ethnic, or religious lines and the promise of more financial support and security for an elite’s supporting group. Playing favorites helps maintain elite power but often alienates the portion of the population that is not part of the ruling party. As shown in Chapter 2, even the Biafra civil war that turned ethnic tribes against one another initially started as a military rebellion against corruption.

Besides the civil war, only one of Nigeria’s coups resulted in significant ethnic violence suggesting the coups were undertaken to determine who would benefit most from Nigeria’s riches rather than as acts of retribution or sectarian violence. “Over decades, a quarter of Nigeria’s oil revenue, \$50-\$100 billion, ‘disappeared,’ enabling a corrupt class of politically oriented millionaires.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Tonnie Iredia, “Nigeria: Our Military Must Not Die,” *Vanguard (Lagos)*, February 15, 2015, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201502160798.html>.

<sup>34</sup> Patrick Meehan and Jackie Speier, “Boko Haram: Emerging Threat to the U.S. Homeland” (U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security: Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, November 30, 2011), 24.

<sup>35</sup> Bouchat, *The Causes of Instability in Nigeria and Implications for the United States*, 12.

This process of political patronage correlates with Herschel Grossman's theory of Kleptocracy and revolutions. "The potential revolutionary [or coup] leader maximizes the expected wealth of his clientele, which is an alternative set of property owners and/or an alternative parasitic ruling class."<sup>36</sup> Determining the political will of national decision-makers towards one option or another often relates to the levels of corruption and patronage in a society. This results in the population losing support in elites.

Nigeria's elites must work to maintain their power by manipulating the trust of the people and the military. "Divisions arise from ethnic and regional distinctions, personal ambition, and a degree of ideological contention. These fissures are intensified by a system whereby politicians compete as much, if not more, for support from military rulers as from the voters."<sup>37</sup>

Nigeria's population is encultured not only to accept corruption, but also to propagate it for their own gain. Many expect direct payments from politicians. In an interesting turn of fate, Nigeria's former anti-corruption czar, Nuhu Ribadu, who was forced to leave the country due to his anti-graft efforts, has returned to run for a governorship.<sup>38</sup> "Mr. Ribadu's campaign highlights a paradox in Nigeria: Voters often decry corruption but want a slice of it. That is awkward terrain for an official who made his name by refusing bribes."<sup>39</sup> Voters appeared at his campaign events with open hands indicating the pervasive system of corruption even forces those who want to avoid it into compliance.

One example of political payment is demonstrated by former President Yar'Adua's handling of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) insurgency in the Niger River Delta. MEND threatened Nigeria's oil economy and foreign oil workers, which quickly raised its notoriety.<sup>40</sup> Due to these conditions, the group garnered immediate political attention, and swift monetary and reconciliatory

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<sup>36</sup> Herschel Grossman, "Kleptocracy and Revolutions," *Oxford Economic Papers* 51, no. 2 (April 1999): 267-83, 268.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Lewis et al., *Stabilizing Nigeria: Sanctions, Incentives, and Support for Civil Society*, Preventive Action Reports, v. 3 (New York: Century Foundation Press, 1998), 64-5.

<sup>38</sup> Drew Hinshaw, "Ex-Antigraft Crusader Faces a Nigerian Paradox," *Wall Street Journal*, March 21, 2015, sec. World, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/nigerian-crusader-faces-corruption-paradox-1426897767?tesla=y>.

<sup>39</sup> Hinshaw, "Ex-Antigraft Crusader Faces a Nigerian Paradox."

<sup>40</sup> Xan Rice, "Nigeria Begins Amnesty for Niger Delta Militants," *The Guardian*, August 6, 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/aug/06/niger-delta-militants-amnesty-launched>.

consolations were offered to restore the peace.<sup>41</sup> No such offers were made to Boko Haram in 2002 when it peacefully sought more opportunity for northerners.

The MEND example shows that the people play a large part in how Nigeria deals with its ethnoreligious conflicts. These conflicts are typically very bloody as one group seeks security by conducting mass killings of another group. For the most part, extreme ethnic or religious violence has not occurred in Nigeria. However, rapid government changeovers have, and these are the typical results of elite manipulation tactics. Dr. Oshita of the Nigerian Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution agrees, and he “implicates elite manipulation, opportunism, social injustice, corruption, and inequity as obstacles to peace-building.”<sup>42</sup>

In most cases, these power changeovers serve to benefit one ethnic group over another, but in reality the masses continued to be poor regardless of ethnicity as the elites quarrel over who the ruling class should be. “The country’s governing elite continues to squander and siphon off the nation’s tremendous oil wealth, neglecting basic health and education services for the vast majority of ordinary citizens.”<sup>43</sup> The level of corruption serves to alienate the poor Nigerian population from the elite, and diminishes their trust level in the government. This trend appears especially true if the president is of a different tribe or religion.

These ethnic issues affected Jonathon’s response to the Boko Haram crisis in two ways. First, early on he seems to have largely ignored the insurgency because he did not view it as a national threat. Jonathan’s advisors told him it was a ploy generated by northern politicians.<sup>44</sup> Nigeria’s elites certainly use their available resources to remain in power, and the population helps set their political will. “The income and power gap is a divisive factor between the North and the South, but it also means that Boko Haram attacks in the North have not (yet) threatened the core of Nigeria’s prosperity. That fact

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<sup>41</sup> Halif Sarki, “Niger Delta: Yar’Adua’s Amnesty Deal: Palliative or Cure?,” *ISS Africa*, September 9, 2009, <http://www.issafrica.org/iss-today/niger-delta-yaraduas-amnesty-deal-palliative-or-cure>.

<sup>42</sup> Oshita Oshita, *Conflict Management in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges* (London: Adonis and Abbey Publishers Ltd, 2007), v.

<sup>43</sup> “Nigeria: War on Corruption Hangs in the Balance,” *Human Rights Watch*, August 25, 2011, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/08/25/nigeria-war-corruption-hangs-balance>.

<sup>44</sup> Andrew Walker, “Why Nigeria Has Not Defeated Boko Haram,” *BBC News*, May 14, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-27396702>.

allows the government to mount a response that is generally more symbolic than material, and at times, to simply ignore the problem.”<sup>45</sup>

Second, Jonathan downplayed the insurgency to look strong to outsiders. When Boko Haram abducted the girls from Chibok, he deflected responsibility by casting Boko Haram as part of a global insurgency.<sup>46</sup> He even said it was the U.S.’s responsibility to “send silver bullets” to stop Boko Haram.<sup>47</sup> Truthfully, “Nigerians are embarrassed that their army needed reinforcements from smaller, poorer neighbors like Chad, Niger and Cameroon to reclaim northern towns from the terrorist group, Boko Haram.”<sup>48</sup> All of Jonathan’s political sidestepping, while Boko Haram continued to gain territory, infuriated the people. The governor of the northern province of Kano, Kwankwaso, lambasted Jonathan for his apathetic approach to the crisis.<sup>49</sup>

President-elect Buhari used the people’s inner anger against Jonathan during the 2015 campaign. Once Boko Haram became a threat to Goodluck Jonathan’s Presidency, it suddenly took on a new priority. South African mercenaries were hired, earning four times that of a Nigerian soldier, and Jonathan began paying close attention to the results.<sup>50</sup> “‘God willing we will catch Shekau before the elections,’ Mr. Jonathan said in response to a question about what his government is doing about Mr. Shekau’s threat to disrupt the elections.”<sup>51</sup> Nigeria’s leaders manipulate the population in many ways, but Buhari’s election shows that they may now have to answer to the people.

### **Nigeria’s COIN Execution**

Nigeria is currently fighting Boko Haram in the Northeastern part of the country, and until recently, Nigeria’s COIN strategy was seen as ineffective. Nigeria has faced this

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<sup>45</sup> Alice Hunt Friend, “Besting Boko Haram,” *War on the Rocks, Commentary*, (January 20, 2015), <http://warontherocks.com/2015/01/besting-boko-haram/>.

<sup>46</sup> Liesl Louw-Vaudran, “Local versus Global in the Fight against Boko Haram,” *ISS Africa*, January 19, 2015, <http://www.issafrica.org/iss-today/local-versus-global-in-the-fight-against-boko-haram>.

<sup>47</sup> Alice Hunt Friend, “Nigerian President to U.S. Government: Send Silver Bullets,” *War on the Rocks, Hasty Ambush*, (February 18, 2015), <http://warontherocks.com/2015/02/nigerian-president-to-u-s-government-send-silver-bullets/>.

<sup>48</sup> Jean Herskovits, “Don’t Steal Nigeria’s Election,” *The New York Times*, March 25, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/26/opinion/dont-steal-nigerias-election.html>.

<sup>49</sup> David Smith in Kano, Harriet Sherwood, and Judith Soal, “Nigerian Schoolgirls’ Home Town in Despair after President Cancels Visit,” *The Guardian*, accessed January 14, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/16/nigerian-schoolgirls-chibok-president-cancels-visit-boko-haram>.

<sup>50</sup> Herskovits, “Don’t Steal Nigeria’s Election.”

<sup>51</sup> Ben Ezeamalu, “Nigeria: We’ll Catch Shekau Before Elections - Jonathan,” *Premium Times*, February 23, 2015, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201502232026.html>.

problem since 2002. Since this time the President, Goodluck Jonathon, declared a state of emergency in the Northeast area twice; first in 2012 and then again in 2013, but he did not achieve much meaningful success against Boko Haram.<sup>52</sup> Despite the President's many words, both the government and the military have received criticism from the people over their lack of effort in containing Boko Haram's insurrection over the past six years.<sup>53</sup> This indicates that until now their collective priorities have not aligned.

Nigeria's leadership started taking more definitive action during campaign season. This newfound interest shows Nigeria's strategic culture in action. As the insurrection made significant gains in the North, Buhari the opposition candidate made this item much more of a political liability for the president. Thus, as the elections drew closer, Jonathan's emphasis on the problem shifted.

The Nigerian military has said it currently does not have the capacity to conduct the elections and its campaign against Boko Haram simultaneously.<sup>54</sup> The Nigerian electoral commission postponed the elections originally scheduled for February 14, 2015 because of the threat of Boko Haram. Many Nigerians saw the delay as a way for Jonathan to prove he could win or to rig the election.<sup>55</sup> Once the insurgency threatened his hold on power, Jonathan took a much more active role in appearing to defeat Boko Haram. Nigerians elected Buhari in the elections held in March 2015 based on his promise to defeat Boko Haram. The further consequences of the election are covered in Chapter 6, which addresses the COIN response of the Jonathan regime to date.

John Nagel, introduced earlier, references Robert Thompson's five important principles of counterinsurgency in his book *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*. This chapter uses Thompson's five principles to evaluate how Nigeria's strategic culture helps or hinders their adoption of a COIN strategy. Chapters 4 and 5 also use these principles to evaluate the other two case studies.

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<sup>52</sup> Nate Haken and Benjamin Kaufman, "State of Emergency in Nigeria: Balancing Hard Security with Peacebuilding," *Fund For Peace*, May 29, 2013, <http://library.fundforpeace.org/20130529-nigeria>.

<sup>53</sup> "Boko Haram Crisis: Chad's Troops Enter Nigeria," *BBC News*, February 3, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31113513>.

<sup>54</sup> Stephanie McCrummen, "Nigerian Vote Delay Prompts Suspicion of Election Rigging, Worries of Violence," *The Washington Post*, February 17, 2015, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/nigerians-fear-election-postponement-could-lead-to-violence/2015/02/17/b9b185da-b250-11e4-bf39-5560f3918d4b\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/nigerians-fear-election-postponement-could-lead-to-violence/2015/02/17/b9b185da-b250-11e4-bf39-5560f3918d4b_story.html).

<sup>55</sup> Herskovits, "Don't Steal Nigeria's Election."

- 1) The government must have a clear political aim: to establish and maintain a free, independent and united country, which is politically and economically stable and viable.
- 2) The government must function in accordance with law.
- 3) The government must have an overall plan.
- 4) The government must give priority to defeating the political subversion, not the guerrillas.
- 5) In the guerrilla phase of an insurgency, a government must secure its base areas first.<sup>56</sup>

*1) The government must have a clear political aim: to establish and maintain a free, independent and united country, which is politically and economically stable and viable.* Nigeria's political decision-making does appear to comply with the first principle. Both the leaders and the people want Nigeria to succeed. However, they differ in their vision of how the government should accomplish this. Goodluck Jonathon did little to help combine these visions and mitigate ethnic fractures. His election in 2011 violated the unwritten rule of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) that the presidency would rotate between the North and South.<sup>57</sup> Since the previous President was a southerner, a northerner should have been nominated by this rule.<sup>58</sup>

This caused angst in the North and "instead of relieving pressure by offering northerners positions in his inner circle, Jonathan surrounded himself primarily with members of his own Ijaw ethnic group and others from his southern home state of Bayelsa and the Niger Delta."<sup>59</sup> He has also attempted to lengthen the Presidential term, and in 2014 was approved to run for another term over more northern objections.<sup>60</sup> Jonathan's machinations to stay in power show signs of both elite manipulation and corruption for which Nigerian leaders both civilian and military are infamous. Jonathon's desire to remain in power past party limits has alienated many northerners and has not helped his government gain trust in the North.

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<sup>56</sup> John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 29. Here, and in each case study chapter, the numbers and specific COIN principle are put in italics and lead each respective portion of the discussion.

<sup>57</sup> Friend, "Besting Boko Haram."

<sup>58</sup> M. O. Uyouyo, "Nigeria: Jonathan And the Politics of 2011," *Daily Independent (Lagos)*, March 12, 2015, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201007280508.html>.

<sup>59</sup> John Campbell, "To Battle Nigeria's Boko Haram, Put Down Your Guns," *Foreign Affairs*, September 9, 2011, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/68249/john-campbell/to-battle-nigerias-boko-haram-put-down-your-guns>.

<sup>60</sup> "Nigerian President Confirms Re-Election Bid," *Aljazeera*, October 30, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/10/nigerian-president-confirms-re-election-bid-2014103017180412540.html>.



2) *The government must function in accordance with law.* The military and police in the North often do not operate in accordance with the law. The watchdog groups Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have both published several papers about abuses of power and torture by Nigerian security forces.<sup>61</sup> These crimes are viewed by many as normal operations and further destabilize the country and alienate the population. The government response to the threat posed by Boko Haram needs to focus on providing security for Nigeria's citizens. Further, it must work to elevate the examples of peaceful Muslim groups in Nigeria and safeguard them from radicalization, thereby delegitimizing Boko Haram as a terrorist organization. A purely forceful response, while useful in some cases to provide security, often adds legitimacy to the insurrection, especially if the local population views the government tactics as unfair, discriminatory, or illegal.

3) *The government must have an overall plan.* The government has a plan; unfortunately, it is too focused on staying in power. Only recently, after elections were postponed, did Nigeria put a large emphasis on its COIN operations. One example is that Nigeria will not allow Chadian troops to penetrate Nigeria to aid the fight against Boko Haram.<sup>62</sup> Chad has noted several times that its larger and wealthier neighbor should bear most of the costs for fighting Boko Haram within its own borders. “‘Nigeria needs to commit and be ready to engage,’ said Maj. Gen. Abdelrahman Youssef Mery, commander of Chad’s Special Anti-Terrorist Group.”<sup>63</sup> Nigeria’s plan needs to include addressing the political aspects of the insurrection such as “poverty and the corruption-driven alienation felt by the population of Northern Nigeria, factors that contribute to Boko Haram's popular support.”<sup>64</sup>

Nigeria’s neighbors “Niger, Cameroon, and Chad say Nigeria neglected the uprising in its economically backward northeast, an opposition stronghold.”<sup>65</sup> The reason

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<sup>61</sup> Welcome to Hell Fire: Torture and Other Ill-Treatment in Nigeria (London: Amnesty International, 2014).; Eric Guttusschuss, “Everyone’s in on the Game” Corruption and Human Rights Abuses by the Nigeria Police Force (New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2010), <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/nigeria0810webwcover.pdf>.

<sup>62</sup> “Welcome to Hell Fire: Torture and Other Ill-Treatment in Nigeria” (Amnesty International, 2014).

<sup>63</sup> Flynn and Felix, “Nigeria Stalls Chad, Aims to Beat Boko Haram before Election.”

<sup>64</sup> Campbell, “To Battle Nigeria’s Boko Haram, Put Down Your Guns.”

<sup>65</sup> Flynn and Felix, “Nigeria Stalls Chad, Aims to Beat Boko Haram before Election.”



the Jonathan administration has now taken up the cause is political. “Muhammadu Buhari, a former military ruler who ran as the presidential candidate for the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC), gained popularity with voters desperate for tough policies both on corruption and Boko Haram.”<sup>66</sup> Based upon the strategic culture in Nigeria it is likely that Buhari will concentrate on the North, where he is from, possibly leaving other parts of Nigeria to founder.

Jonathan has taken some action. In Jan 2012, he declared a state of emergency in the North, and he replaced his national security advisor with a retired army colonel, Sambo Dasuki.<sup>67</sup> This position serves as the go-between for the President and the military. Many believed at the time that putting a northern Muslim in this position of power would help the campaign, but it seems to have done little to stop Boko Haram’s growth, as some of Dasuki’s recommendations went unused.<sup>68</sup>

*4) The government must give priority to defeating the political subversion, not the guerrillas.* Jonathan’s answer was to put more troops in the North, but this heavy-handed approach did not seem to work.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, it violated the fourth premise. Jonathan did little at this stage to address the underlying political issues in the North. In his work for Human Rights Watch, Carl LeVan “posits that a forceful response at times had the unintended consequence of radicalizing local communities against the state, making the problem of human insecurity more difficult to solve in the long run.”<sup>70</sup>

The problem with using a strong security force initiative is the people’s lack of trust in the government. “Corruption is at the heart of many of Nigeria’s most serious human rights problems, including access to justice, police brutality, [and] violations of economic and social rights.”<sup>71</sup> Boko Haram uses these doubts to create instability amongst Nigeria’s northern population.

Boko Haram’s key manipulation is the transfer from economic- or security-based concerns to large-scale ethnic identity conflicts amongst the population at large. “Because identity-based concerns are tied to fundamental human needs, conflicts surrounding

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<sup>66</sup> “Nigeria’s Jonathan Sacks Security and Defence Chiefs,” *BBC News*, June 23, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-18553819>.

<sup>67</sup> “Nigeria’s Jonathan Sacks Security and Defence Chiefs.”

<sup>68</sup> “Nigeria’s Jonathan Sacks Security and Defence Chiefs.”

<sup>69</sup> Campbell, “To Battle Nigeria’s Boko Haram, Put Down Your Guns.”

<sup>70</sup> “Nigeria’s Jonathan Sacks Security and Defence Chiefs.”

<sup>71</sup> Albin-Lackey, *Nigeria: Corruption on Trial?*, 3.

identity often threaten parties' very existence. Such conflicts are typically more intense than interest-based conflicts.”<sup>72</sup>

The military is critical to preserving the peace in this situation, but it must be wary of using harsh or illegal practices to prosecute insurgents. Brutality will only serve to lend credibility to the insurgents' cause and add numbers to their ranks. One example of abuse, according to Human Rights Watch, is that after being ambushed by Boko Haram, “the army responded by setting much of the town on fire, in a blaze that killed about 200 people.”<sup>73</sup> Based on the military's past performance, building trust will be difficult, but it is necessary to create a secure environment for citizens of all ethnicities and religions. Protection of the population will also help ensure that Nigerian society does not devolve further into separate vigilante groups that perpetuate more violence in order to seek revenge.

*5) In the guerrilla phase of an insurgency, a government must secure its base areas first.* In protecting the population, the government, executes the fifth principle of COIN strategy. Building up its base areas first. To date, the government has done the opposite of this. Boko Haram has been allowed to terrorize the population with little retribution. The Nigerian military has been unable to stop this terror despite increased troops in the North. Local politicians realize the weakness of the Federal government. “The Emir of Kano, Alhaji Muhammad Sanusi stressed that Boko Haram members were only able to take over some territories from the country because the state was unable to defend its citizens and protect lives and property due to the weakness of the system.”<sup>74</sup> Another northern senator, Maina Ma'aji Lawan, said, “The military has abandoned the very residents they were meant to protect.”<sup>75</sup>

Thus, Boko Haram has been allowed to create a ‘safe haven’ for its operations amongst a population that it has either manipulated into action against government forces

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<sup>72</sup> Michelle Maiese, “Causes of Disputes and Conflicts,” *Beyond Intractability*, October 2003, <http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/underlying-causes>, 5.

<sup>73</sup> Drew Hinshaw and Gbenga Akingbule, “Boko Haram Extends Its Grip in Nigeria,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 6, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/boko-haram-overruns-villages-and-army-base-in-northeast-nigeria-1420467667?KEYWORDS=Boko+Haram>.

<sup>74</sup> Simon Ebegbulem, “Boko Haram: Nigeria Is a Weak State - Sanusi,” *Vanguard News*, January 18, 2015, <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/01/boko-haram-nigeria-weak-state-sanusi/>.

<sup>75</sup> Hinshaw and Akingbule, “Boko Haram Extends Its Grip in Nigeria.”

or terrorized into silence.<sup>76</sup> This premise flows from Stathis Kalyvas' argument that differences at the local level are important. "Although these cleavages are not the only mechanism producing allegiance and violence, they appear to have a substantial impact on the distribution of allegiances as well as the targets and intensity of violence."<sup>77</sup> Currently, Boko Haram creates and uses local cleavages to their advantage.

After the government postponed the elections in Feb 2015, it made a more concerted effort to recapture territory and set up a base of operations. Goodluck Jonathan visited war-torn cities in the North as an act of goodwill and in an effort to rebuild trust with the population.<sup>78</sup> This supports the COIN strategy, but it also remains consistent with Nigeria's strategic culture in that remaining in power is the most important political factor.

As noted previously, the reasons for Nigeria's struggles with counterinsurgency are many. Until late 2014, the political will to act did not seem present. Goodluck Jonathan increased troops in the North, but the strategy was too security-driven and impeded trust building with the population.<sup>79</sup> Further, Boko Haram was not deemed a priority until the insurgency gained significant strength, garnered international attention, and finally threatened Jonathon's reelection.

Internally, the military is in disarray. The two main reasons link back to Nigeria's culture. First, a civilian mistrust of the military caused them to underfund and underequip it. Second, military leaders, like their civilian equivalent, fight for prestige within the organization. This posturing leads to internal patronage systems and corruption. Skilled officers that will not operate according to these systems are forced out. Ultimately, this leads to a poorly trained military with low morale.

When attacked by Boko Haram, this military "has repeatedly fled, with soldiers complaining about insufficient ammunition and body armor. Soldiers have mutinied, and wives of soldiers have publicly protested their husbands' deployment."<sup>80</sup> The military's

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<sup>76</sup> "Nigeria: Boko Haram Insurgency Fights On With At Least 4,000 'Hardcore' Militants," *Deutsche Welle (Bonn)*, February 7, 2015, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201502070258.html>.

<sup>77</sup> Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 376.

<sup>78</sup> "Nigeria's Goodluck Jonathan: Tide Turned against Boko Haram," *BBC News*, February 25, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31620989>.

<sup>79</sup> Campbell, "To Battle Nigeria's Boko Haram, Put Down Your Guns."

<sup>80</sup> Whitehead, "No Solution to Boko Haram from Nigeria's Army."

retreat or lack of action has allowed Boko Haram to capture both territory and weapons in several cases.<sup>81</sup>

Any poorly trained military with low morale and pushed to its limit is more susceptible to committing atrocities against the people than one that is well trained. Both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have reported on the brutal tactics that the Nigerian military has used while fighting the counterinsurgency.<sup>82</sup> The troops stationed in the North are often not locals and are not empathetic enough to the plight of the people with whom they interact. In the long run, these overly brutal tactics help Boko Haram with their narrative.

Nigeria's strategic culture as evidenced by the interactions of the government, the military, and the people certainly impacts its implementation of a COIN strategy. Next, this thesis turns to two additional COIN case studies in Colombia and Sri Lanka to show comparative relevance.



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<sup>81</sup> “Boko Haram Crisis: Is the Nigerian Army Failing?,” *BBC News*, February 4, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31046809>.

<sup>82</sup> “Nigeria: At Least 1,000 Civilians Dead Since January,” *Human Rights Watch*, March 26, 2015, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2015/03/26/nigeria-least-1000-civilians-dead-january-0>.

## Chapter 4

### Colombia and the FARC

*The conventional army loses if it does not win, the guerrilla wins if he does not lose.*

- Henry Kissinger

In searching for the connection between culture and counterinsurgency (COIN) execution, it is important to broaden the historical perspective by using a comparative method. This thesis uses two case studies to compare with Nigeria's COIN experience. It first examines Colombia's ongoing COIN struggle in Chapter 4, and then focuses on Sri Lanka's long but successful campaign in Chapter 5. Surveying these two cases allows for a comparison between them and Nigeria to determine how a nation's culture influences its strategic decision making for COIN execution. These correlations help to illuminate relevant conclusions and recommendations.

The two case studies were chosen for specific reasons. First, similar to Nigeria the countries of both case studies are democracies. Second, cases outside of Africa were chosen for the purpose of diversity. Third, the cases were chosen because they all had different apparent political motivations. In his book, *The Mind of the Terrorist*, Jerrold Post identifies three models to categorize political terrorism: "nationalist-separatist terrorism, social revolutionary terrorism, and religious extremist terrorism."<sup>1</sup> Each of the three cases chosen represents an insurgency that has used terrorism as a tactic. Thus, as described in Chapter 1 these terms are used somewhat interchangeably, and each case study was chosen to fit into one of Post's three models.

The religious overtones of Nigeria's current struggle define it as a religious extremist insurgency. Columbia's Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) fought a Marxist revolutionary insurgency. The Sri Lankan Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), also known as the Tamil Tigers, is an indigenous group that fought a

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<sup>1</sup> Jerrold M. Post, *The Mind of the Terrorist: The Psychology of Terrorism from the IRA to Al-Qaeda*, 1st ed (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 9.

nationalist-separatist insurgency. The 50-year Colombian case, which remains ongoing, demonstrates a COIN failure while the Sri Lankan case is presented as a success. The case studies do not seek to identify each country's specific strategic culture themes as the thesis did for Nigeria. Rather, they apply Nigeria's themes against the case histories to examine the similarities and differences.

This chapter provides a brief history of the Colombian case study and Chapter 5 presents the Sri Lankan case study. It then assesses Colombia's history through the strategic culture framework identified in Chapter 1. Finally, Thompson's Five COIN Principles are applied to judge the effectiveness of Colombia's response. The aggregated cultural themes are compared with Nigeria in Chapter 6 to make relevant recommendations. Again, this comparative case study seeks only to draw out the similarities and differences between each nation's strategic cultures to provide a useful multi-angled examination of Nigeria's COIN response.

### **History of Colombia and the FARC**

The first case examined will be Colombia's response to the FARC insurgency. This insurgency has raged for over fifty years and remains unresolved. This conflict has left 220,000 dead and displaced 5.7 million.<sup>2</sup> Ceasefire negotiations that began in 2010 are ongoing, but the FARC attacked Colombia's oil infrastructure in July of 2014 and captured Army General Ruben Alzate in November putting the talks in jeopardy.<sup>3</sup> Despite being a social revolutionary insurgency, this conflict has striking strategic culture similarities to Nigeria's struggle with Boko Haram. Both countries are democracies. Colombia's democracy is longstanding, as it gained independence in 1819.<sup>4</sup>

The historical importance of two main political parties meant that authoritarian governments have been short-lived, but disagreements between these parties continue to plague the country.<sup>5</sup> Following independence from Spain, Simon Bolivar, Colombia's first president, founded the Conservative Party while his vice president, Francisco de

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<sup>2</sup> Danielle Renwick and Stephanie Hanson, "FARC, ELN: Colombia's Left-Wing Guerrillas," *Council on Foreign Relations*, December 1, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/colombia/farc-eln-colombias-left-wing-guerrillas/p9272>.

<sup>3</sup> Renwick and Hanson, "FARC, ELN."

<sup>4</sup> Peter Waldmann, "Colombia and the FARC," in *Democracy and Counterterrorism: Lessons from the Past*, ed. Robert J. Art and Louise Richardson (Washington, D.C: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007), 221–60, 222.

<sup>5</sup> Waldmann, "Colombia and the FARC," 222.

Paula Santander founded the Liberal Party.<sup>6</sup> Almost immediately, these parties disagreed on the public role of the church and started a long and bloody civil war.<sup>7</sup>

This war between Liberals and Conservatives across the nation was extremely violent. The civil war, when combined with Colombia's rugged geography, isolated the rural areas and meant it was difficult for the government to exercise effective control over the country's territory. "This geographic isolation for many Colombians bred a distrust of central government that still persists in rural Colombia."<sup>8</sup>

The civil war had two pivotal moments. The War of the Thousand Days (1899-1902) resulted in 100,000 killed. Liberals, now located mostly in rural areas, finally agreed to a cease-fire.<sup>9</sup> The Liberals would again take up arms after boycotting the 1950 election. Conservatives working with the Catholic Church launched a military crackdown on this violence that started another ten-year civil war.<sup>10</sup>

The culmination of this civil war is referred to as the 'La Violencia' or the bloodletting. It lasted from 1948 to 1958 and resulted in an estimated 200,000 deaths.<sup>11</sup> A five-year military dictatorship was required to restore order following this brutal conflict, but otherwise the country has maintained its civil government and democratic elections throughout its history.<sup>12</sup> Like the start of Nigeria's fourth republic, Colombia was able to maintain elections and peace by implementing a power-sharing agreement between the Conservative and Liberal elites. This party, called the National Front, alternated its Presidential nomination and divided government positions evenly between the two ideologies.<sup>13</sup>

This agreement satisfied Colombian elites but did not provide meaningful social reform. The agreement also changed the conflict from one based on party lines to one

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<sup>6</sup> James Zackrison, "Colombia," in *Combating Terrorism: Strategies of Ten Countries*, ed. Yonah Alexander (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 117.

<sup>7</sup> Waldmann, "Colombia and the FARC," 222.

<sup>8</sup> Leech, *The FARC*, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Leech, *The FARC*, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Leech, *The FARC*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Jerrold M. Post, "Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)," in *The World's Most Threatening Terrorist Networks and Criminal Gangs*, ed. Michael T. Kindt, Jerrold M. Post, and Barry R. Schneider, 1st ed (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 235-45, 236.

<sup>12</sup> Zackrison, "Colombia." (117-118); Waldmann, "Colombia and the FARC," 223.

<sup>13</sup> Leech, *The FARC*, 10.



based on class divisions.<sup>14</sup> The elites continued to use corrupt and violent practices against the peasants creating the “fear, desperation, and sense of marginalization that led to the formation of FARC.”<sup>15</sup> The FARC originated as a Marxist-Leninist social revolutionary group, in 1964, to address these concerns and overthrow the democratic Colombian government.<sup>16</sup>

Following La Violencia, Che Guevara visited in 1952 and talked about revolution inspiring many peasants in the Liberal Party to adopt a Marxist communist agenda.<sup>17</sup> This group eventually became the FARC. Other violent groups including the National Liberation Army (ELN) and large narcoterrorism gangs have emerged in an unstable Colombia, but the FARC are the longest lasting and historically most dominant insurgent group in Columbia. “The FARC, which emerged from an earlier period of violence, organized itself as a regular army and operated as a conventional force in certain regions and specific historical junctures.”<sup>18</sup> Since the time of FARC’s formation, membership has risen and fallen. At its height in the mid-2000’s, the FARC claimed over 16,000 members.<sup>19</sup>

The Colombian government has attempted many military crackdowns on the FARC. The first of these was Operation Marquetalia launched in 1964. In this huge operation, 16,000 government troops attacked a small village harboring 48 peasant guerrillas who all managed to escape.<sup>20</sup> They formed the basis of FARC’s emerging leadership. The government continued to alternate between fighting and negotiating with the FARC throughout the 1980’s and 90’s, without significant success.<sup>21</sup>

Another military operation began in 2002 when newly elected President, Alvaro Uribe, started to crackdown on the FARC and a government airstrike killed one of their

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<sup>14</sup> Leech, *The FARC*, 13.

<sup>15</sup> Post, “Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC),” 236.

<sup>16</sup> Post, *The Mind of the Terrorist*, 149.

<sup>17</sup> Leech, *The FARC*, 9.

<sup>18</sup> Marc Chernick, “FARC-EP: From Liberal Guerrillas to Marxist Rebels to Post-Cold War Insurgents,” in *Terror, Insurgency, and the State: Ending Protracted Conflicts*, ed. Marianne Heiberg, Brendan O’Leary, and John Tirman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 50–81, 58.

<sup>19</sup> Renwick and Hanson, “FARC, ELN.”

<sup>20</sup> Leech, *The FARC*, 14.

<sup>21</sup> Gabriel Pinilla, “Are We Approaching the Real Defeat of the FARC in Colombia?” (U.S. Army War College, 2009), 2.

key leaders, Raul Reyes, in 2008.<sup>22</sup> “The group had a number of setbacks in 2010 highlighted by the September 2010 Colombian military raid that resulted in the death of the FARC’s senior military commander Victor Julio Suarez Rojas, better known as Mono Jojoy.”<sup>23</sup> Despite these losses, the FARC remains active with over 7,000 members and continues to use terrorist tactics. According to Human Rights Watch, there is strong evidence that FARC members have committed over 300 killings since 2013 just in the southern city of Tumaco.<sup>24</sup>

The FARC have successfully operated over a long period, and still control large parts of Colombia. “The Colombian conflict has killed 220,000 people and uprooted more than five million since the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) was launched in 1964.”<sup>25</sup> The government has tried to negotiate several times successfully invoking ceasefires only to see them broken. Over their history, the FARC have transformed and now acknowledge that they fight for land reform and government concessions on justice for FARC victims more than any ideology.<sup>26</sup>

### **Colombia’s Strategic Culture**

The battle between the Colombian government and the FARC exhibits several similarities and differences with Nigeria. The next section draws comparisons between the strategic cultures of Colombia and Nigeria through the framework of the government, the military, and the people.

#### **The Government**

The first comparison between Nigeria and Colombia examines the similarities and differences of their governmental systems. Both of these countries have demonstrated high levels of corruption and governmental inefficiency.<sup>27</sup> Currently, Colombia ranks as

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<sup>22</sup> Renwick and Hanson, “FARC, ELN.”

<sup>23</sup> “Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC),” *National Counterterrorism Center*, accessed March 28, 2015, <http://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/farc.html>.

<sup>24</sup> “Colombia: FARC Battering Afro-Colombian Areas,” *Human Rights Watch*, July 30, 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/07/30/colombia-farc-battering-afro-colombian-areas>.

<sup>25</sup> “Step towards Ending Colombia’s 50-Year FARC Conflict,” *ABC News*, March 8, 2015, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-08/colombia-takes-step-towards-ending-50-year-farc-conflict/6288876>.

<sup>26</sup> “To the Edge and Back Again,” *The Economist*, August 31, 2013, <http://www.economist.com/news/americas/21584384-hiccup-serves-confirm-government-and-farc-are-making-progress-edge-and>.

<sup>27</sup> Waldmann, “Colombia and the FARC,” 226.

94/175 on Transparency International's corruption perception index.<sup>28</sup> Thus, both Colombia and Nigeria's cultures have revolved around elite manipulation and a system of political patronage. This system often sacrifices the interests of the larger population for the interests of the elite.

Colombia has struggled with the FARC revolution for over 50 years because they are unable to appease them politically and were unable to control society through a monopoly on force. "The political elites did not even try to obtain this monopoly; they preferred instead to arm the citizens to help to defend their cause."<sup>29</sup> Colombia's elite encouraged a culture of civil violence and elite manipulation by allowing numerous vigilante groups. The existence of these groups delegitimizes the government.<sup>30</sup>

Colombia's exhibited state weakness mirrors that of Nigeria. In Colombia, the century-long competition between elites and the corruption of the government had a hand in allowing the FARC to become firmly rooted.<sup>31</sup> "The inherent weakness of the Colombian state since its independence was only compounded by intra-elite conflict and then by an armed opposition led by rebel groups."<sup>32</sup> The FARC use the government's elitism to its advantage by perpetuating the notion that the masses "should consider themselves victims of the government and should bear arms against 'the enemy,' alongside FARC."<sup>33</sup>

Unlike Nigeria's competition for resources between ethnic tribes, the competition in Colombia is among the landed elites who have shared power without fear of military or rebel takeover for the entire life of the Nation.<sup>34</sup> "The accommodative relationship between economic elites and the Colombian state is maintained through financial contributions, interpersonal relations, the financing of policy-planning groups, and/or

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<sup>28</sup> "Corruption Perceptions Index: 2014," *Transparency International*, 2015, <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2014/infographic>.

<sup>29</sup> Waldmann, "Colombia and the FARC," 226.

<sup>30</sup> Waldmann, "Colombia and the FARC," 227.

<sup>31</sup> Waldmann, "Colombia and the FARC," 228.

<sup>32</sup> Nazih Richani, "Fragmentation of Sovereignty and Violent Non-State Actors in Colombia," in *Violent Non-State Actors in World Politics*, ed. Kledja Mulaj (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 27–44, 31.

<sup>33</sup> Post, *The Mind of the Terrorist*, 154.

<sup>34</sup> Chernick, "FARC-EP," 51.

directly taking positions within the state.”<sup>35</sup> The elite also work to keep Colombia’s military subservient to civilian rule, yet just powerful enough to protect their interests.

### **The Military**

The military in Colombia has not had the prominence that the Nigerian military has. “The [Colombian] military has never been an important power group in the country, and periods of unconstitutional authoritarian government have been the exception to the rule.”<sup>36</sup> Despite the nearly constant violence in Colombia, its armed forces have remained weak for several reasons. The government has never fully integrated a national security strategy into its plans.<sup>37</sup> “Even in the midst of war, civilian governments tried not to empower the military, to avoid being perceived as militaristic.”<sup>38</sup>

Overall, this strategy has not worked. Like Nigeria, the weak military of Colombia has caused more human rights abuses rather than less. It also gave rise to many paramilitary groups. These vigilante groups, such as the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC), diminished the government’s monopoly on force and further contributed to escalating violence.<sup>39</sup>

Just as in Nigeria, the Colombian political elites may still remember the country’s one military coup. “In 1953, the Conservative president was ousted by a military coup that brought General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla to power.”<sup>40</sup> The fear of a military takeover presents a perverse incentive to the Colombian government to keep its forces weak. By the numbers, the military looks strong, but many of the troops work in administration rather than being front-line combat forces. The Army boasts some 145,000 men, but only 20,000 actively undertook COIN operations.<sup>41</sup> Additionally, like Nigeria, the military allocates and spends its budget without much accountability or civilian oversight.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> William Avilés, *Global Capitalism, Democracy, and Civil-Military Relations in Colombia*, SUNY Series in Global Politics (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), 24.

<sup>36</sup> Waldmann, “Colombia and the FARC,” 222.

<sup>37</sup> Alberto Mejia, “Colombia’s National Security Strategy, A New ‘COIN’ Approach” (U.S. Army War College, 2008), 15.

<sup>38</sup> Mejia, “Colombia’s National Security Strategy, A New ‘COIN’ Approach,” 15.

<sup>39</sup> Waldmann, “Colombia and the FARC,” 227.

<sup>40</sup> Leech, *The FARC*, 9.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas A Marks, *Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2002), 10.

<sup>42</sup> Richani, “Fragmentation of Sovereignty and Violent Non-State Actors in Colombia.”

Like the FARC, the Colombian military varies in size from year to year. As the FARC gained strength from 1990-2000, the military was ill equipped to respond, and troop morale fell. Colombian Army Colonel, Gabriel Pinilla explains this sense of despair. “With a 100,000 man Army, badly equipped, badly trained and without leadership, the hopes to defend the country were unachievable.”<sup>43</sup>

The Colombian population’s fear evidences the military’s lack of readiness. “Fear is a word used by all Colombians to express their primary concern: fear of not being able to leave their homes, fear of not making it safely through the day, and fear that their families will be kidnapped or killed at any time.”<sup>44</sup> This fear results from both insurgent and narcoterrorist violence, but ultimately shows the inability of the Colombian government to protect its citizens. When the population is afraid, it loses trust in the government.

### **The People**

Like Nigeria, Columbia has also struggled to gain the trust of the people. As shown in Chapter 3, the Nigerian government had very little incentive to deal with Boko Haram until the 2015 elections. The lack of protection for the people and the human rights abuses undertaken by the military caused a large mistrust of the government. Columbia has had the same cultural difficulties in this regard.

Columbia’s struggles against the FARC resulted in a loss of political will to deal with the problem over the years. Government leaders became reactionary. “Part of the reason for the lack of a comprehensive policy (security and otherwise) is the tendency among Colombian leaders to not formulate a plan before crises erupt. Thus, policy tends to be reactive, and the decision makers are constantly overwhelmed by events.”<sup>45</sup>

Additionally, the rise of the narcoterrorists focused U.S. attention and aid on that problem. The Colombian police and military forces were forced to split into two main subdivisions: counternarcotic and counterinsurgency. Many in the Colombian population saw the second as the more important task despite the US and Colombian Governments’ focus on the first. “Combating the guerrillas is Colombia’s most pressing security

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<sup>43</sup> Pinilla, “Are We Approaching the Real Defeat of the FARC in Colombia?,” 7.

<sup>44</sup> Zackrison, “Colombia,” 34.

<sup>45</sup> Zackrison, “Colombia,” 129-30.

problem at this time, and any strategy that detracts from this concern also detracts from Colombia's security."<sup>46</sup>

Throughout the 1980's and 90's a lack of sufficient military strength coupled with unwillingness by Colombian policy makers to concede to FARC demands caused the government to turn a blind eye toward FARC activity. "The government's response to the permanent presence of guerrilla organizations on Colombian territory has been ambivalent over the past twenty-five years."<sup>47</sup> During this period, if guerrilla groups only operated in the parts of the country they dominated, the government did not try to intervene to protect the population.<sup>48</sup>

The increasing problem was that, "During this period [1990's], the FARC was so pervasive in Colombia that they had active support in 622 of 1,098 municipalities."<sup>49</sup> A large scale FARC attack on the Vaupes department (equivalent to Nigerian State) capital of Mitu forced the government to concede territory to the FARC. "Mitu was significant on a national scale as it represented the deterioration of the whole government of Colombia and the idea that the Colombian military could lose the war against the insurgency."<sup>50</sup> Following this attack the Colombian government agreed to a ceasefire that provided the FARC with a 15,000 square mile demilitarized zone.<sup>51</sup> This area is slightly larger than that controlled by Boko Haram in February of 2015.

Due to these years of government decline, the FARC reached its height in 2001. It enjoyed international recognition, a self-governed area free of government intervention, and a large self-sustained military force. The population rejected this as a new status quo. "In 2002, after the breakdown of the final peace process, the election turned not on the issue of peace, as it had done during the five previous presidential campaigns. This time the election was decided on the question of which candidate could implement a more effective security policy."<sup>52</sup>

The Colombian Government could not agree on a single national security strategy

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<sup>46</sup> Zackrison, "Colombia," 134.

<sup>47</sup> Waldmann, "Colombia and the FARC," 233.

<sup>48</sup> Post, "Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)," 238.

<sup>49</sup> Jon-Paul N. Maddaloni, "An Analysis of the FARC in Colombia: Breaking the Frame of FM 3-24" (School of Advanced Military Studies, 2009), 16.

<sup>50</sup> Maddaloni, "An Analysis of the FARC in Colombia," 18.

<sup>51</sup> Maddaloni, "An Analysis of the FARC in Colombia," 18.

<sup>52</sup> Chernick, "FARC-EP," 61.



and this angered the population and caused a loss of trust in the government. “Perhaps the most significant consequence of this lack of consensus and strategy is the lack of trust that it has engendered throughout society. The electorate mistrusts the politicians, the military mistrusts the civilian leadership it is sworn to uphold, and politicians mistrust the armed and police forces that protect them.”<sup>53</sup> Since 2002, two successive Colombian Presidents have worked to strengthen Colombia’s COIN execution across all fronts with the hope of ending the insurgency.

### **Colombia’s COIN Execution**

Following the framework established in Chapter 3, Colombia’s COIN execution is compared to Thompson’s Five Principles of COIN.<sup>54</sup> This comparison shows how Colombia’s execution compares with Nigeria’s.

*1) The government must have a clear political aim: to establish and maintain a free, independent and united country, which is politically and economically stable and viable.* The government must have a clear political aim. As shown in the section on political will, while Colombia has not had a clear vision of a peacefully united country, it is finally developing the combined will and military capacity to create it. Due to increasing political pressure and violence the Constitution was rewritten in 1991. This rewrite was an unprecedented step forward for Colombia as it emphasized “human rights, ecological concerns, a participative civil society, decentralization, and demilitarization.”<sup>55</sup> This decade produced disappointing results in practice, due to a poorly equipped military and an elite that was not interested because the insurgency did not affect their interests.

In 2002, the Colombian President, Álvaro Uribe, strengthened the relationship between his civilian government and the military by leveraging Constitutional changes. This change led to a stronger military and encouraged succeeding presidents to refine and improve these changes. “Throughout his presidential campaign Alvaro Uribe laid down his strategic vision to achieve security by democratic means. He also explained that social cohesion and economic development were key components of his security proposal.”<sup>56</sup> Initially, however, the Army’s execution of Uribe’s plan focused on the military element

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<sup>53</sup> Zackrison, “Colombia,” 154.

<sup>54</sup> Please refer to page

<sup>55</sup> Maddaloni, “An Analysis of the FARC in Colombia,” 17.

<sup>56</sup> Mejia, “Colombia’s National Security Strategy, A New ‘COIN’ Approach,” 18.



too much, and the FARC quickly leveraged this over reaction to gain legitimacy for their cause.

2) *The government must function in accordance with law.* Two past examples show that even when operating within the law the Colombian government has had trouble when military force was used to pursue COIN objectives. Under President Tyrbay Ayala (1978-82) the Colombian government tried to use repressive military force to extinguish the guerrilla problem.<sup>57</sup> This campaign met with defeat and only succeeded in creating more rebels. “As a consequence of this vast repressive campaign, many young people who did not see a possibility of legally expressing their dissatisfaction ended up joining guerrilla groups.”<sup>58</sup> Repressive tactics did not work well in this case and only increased support for the FARC.

Repression was not the only reason that disaffected youth joined the FARC. They also could not find work, and the FARC paid a decent wage. “Although for some, there does still seem to be ideological motivation for joining FARC, poor farmers and teenagers join out of boredom or simply because it pays them about \$350 dollars a month, which is \$100 dollars more than a Colombian Army conscript.”<sup>59</sup>

3) *The government must have an overall plan.* Following Uribe’s 2002 crackdown, the FARC militia ballooned to an all-time high in 2005 of 18,000 regular fighters.<sup>60</sup> By this time, this large-scale peasant revolution was no longer connected to communist ideology but served as a way to combat repression and elite manipulation of the poor.<sup>61</sup> The government did not have an effective plan to respond to this threat until 2008.

4) *The government must give priority to defeating the political subversion, not the guerrillas.* The Colombian government does not give priority to the political causes of the insurrection. Many youths join the FARC for three primary reasons: as a revolt against repression or revenge, for economic opportunity, and out of fear. The Colombian government has not properly addressed these issues. “Sociologist James Peters states that 80 percent of FARC’s members are peasants.

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<sup>57</sup> Waldmann, “Colombia and the FARC,” 233.

<sup>58</sup> Waldmann, “Colombia and the FARC,” 233.

<sup>59</sup> Post, “Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC),” 240.

<sup>60</sup> Chernick, “FARC-EP,” 56.

<sup>61</sup> Chernick, “FARC-EP,” 56.

Most are young, poorly educated people from rural areas.”<sup>62</sup> Like Boko Haram, the FARC also uses child soldiers. “Many new recruits do not seem to have a choice about whether to join FARC. Although FARC has stipulated that 15 was the minimum age for recruitment, this standard has not been respected.”<sup>63</sup>

Colombian Colonel, Gabriel Pinilla, opined on the government’s military readiness in his 2009 U.S. Army War College thesis. “To sustain and face this permanent and growing menace, the government had its military forces (Army, Navy, Air Force), and National Police outfitted with obsolete equipment, low training, and insufficient number of members, unable to face the different threats.”<sup>64</sup>

*5) In the guerrilla phase of an insurgency, a government must secure its base areas first.* Following this low point in 2005, however, the Colombian government experienced critical success in 2007 and 2008. During this period, they followed Thompson’s fifth principle of COIN and secured their base areas. They did this by “starting in the municipalities and departments around the capital and moving outward from there...pushing the FARC into some of the most remote areas of Colombia.”<sup>65</sup>

In 2010, Colombian voters elected a liberal president, Juan Manuel Santos.<sup>66</sup> His reelection in 2014 could signal the end of the FARC insurgency. Santos’ is finally working to fulfill all five of Thompson’s Principles. He has focused on achieving the third principle by bringing a peace plan to the negotiating table. Santos’ plan is two-fold. He is working to create more jobs for those who are disaffected, and he is actively seeking to create a political solution at the negotiating table.<sup>67</sup> Thus, his new plan addresses Thompson’s fourth point by mitigating the underlying political issues.

The Colombian government has also strengthened its army. This additional strength provides better protection for the Colombian people and has weakened the

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<sup>62</sup> Post, “Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC),” 240.

<sup>63</sup> Post, *The Mind of the Terrorist*, 154.

<sup>64</sup> Pinilla, “Are We Approaching the Real Defeat of the FARC in Colombia?,” 6.

<sup>65</sup> Maddaloni, “An Analysis of the FARC in Colombia,” 23.

<sup>66</sup> Doug Gavel, “Kennedy School Alumnus Elected President of Colombia,” *John F. Kennedy School of Government*, June 24, 2010, <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/news-events/news/articles/alumnus-colombia-jun10>.

<sup>67</sup> Luke Horswell, “Santos Promises More Jobs, Education and Healthcare for Colombia’s Caribbean Coast| Colombia Reports,” *Colombia News | Colombia Reports*, March 17, 2014, <http://colombiareports.co/santos-kicks-re-election-campaign-caribbean-coast/>; Leonardo Goi, “No Peace with Impunity for Colombia,” *New Internationalist*, March 31, 2015, <http://newint.org/blog/2015/03/31/colombia-peace-talks/>.

FARC over successive air and ground campaigns from 2007-2015. The military has engaged in successful airstrikes that have killed key leaders, but government leaders still have little political will to engage the FARC on the ground in the southern jungles where they are strongest.<sup>68</sup> The FARC's strength makes a negotiated settlement seem very attractive.

Negotiations that began in Cuba in 2012 are currently ongoing.<sup>69</sup> These negotiations focus on five main points: "land reform, political participation, drug trafficking, victims' rights and reparations, and disarmament of the rebels and implementation of the peace deal."<sup>70</sup> Currently, there is bilateral support for the first three, but severe disagreement about victims' rights and disarmament. Until Colombia resolves these issues, the FARC will remain a political reality.

Like Nigeria, Colombia is still struggling with its insurgency. While unsuccessful in its resolution, Colombia appears ahead of Nigeria. The constitutional rewrite in 1991, and the election of President Santos, who was willing to negotiate and address the political problems, hopefully, put Colombia on the path to eventual peace. Nigeria appears to have taken a step forward by peacefully electing an opposition candidate for the first time in its history. Like Santos, Muhammadu Buhari, a northern Muslim, and former military dictator, promises to do more to address the political aspects of the Boko Haram insurgency.

While Colombia and the FARC struggle to agree on the details of their peace agreement, Sri Lanka is also rejuvenating after the end of its 26-year insurgency. The difference is that Sri Lanka eventually annihilated its opponent militarily. The demise of the LTTE provides a counterpoint to Colombia's ongoing negotiations. It shows how a change in the population's interests created a political window, allowing Sri Lanka to win its peace.

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<sup>68</sup> Dana Priest, "Covert Action in Colombia," News, *Washington Post*, (December 21, 2013), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/investigative/2013/12/21/covert-action-in-colombia/>.

<sup>69</sup> "Step towards Ending Colombia's 50-Year FARC Conflict."

<sup>70</sup> Renwick and Hanson, "FARC, ELN."

## Chapter 5

### Sri Lanka and the LTTE

*There is only one decisive victory: the last.*

- Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*

The second case assessed is Sri Lanka's response to its brutal Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) insurgency. Like Nigeria and Columbia, Sri Lanka was a democracy at the time of its insurgency and is the oldest electoral democracy in Asia.<sup>1</sup> Unlike these two, Sri Lanka successfully suppressed its insurgency in 2009. The thesis uses Sri Lanka due to its eventual enactment of a successful counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy, and its initial strategic similarities and subsequent differences from Nigeria. Like Nigeria, Sri Lanka was a British colony prior to its independence. This pre-colonial linkage presents an interesting history and comparison with Nigeria. Further, the Sri Lankan struggle was a nationalist-separatist movement, so it fills the final category in Jerrod Post's framework introduced at the beginning of Chapter 4.

This chapter mirrors the format presented in Chapter 4. First, it presents a brief history of the Sri Lankan conflict. Next, it compares Sri Lanka's strategic culture to Nigeria highlighting the similarities and differences. Finally, it uses Thompson's Five Principles to determine why Sri Lanka was eventually successful in its COIN application.

#### History of Sri Lanka and the LTTE

As in Nigeria, understanding the ethnic make-up of Sri Lanka is critical to analyzing the eventual insurgency. Due to its bifurcated population, the Sri Lankan case has ethnic and religious subtexts, but at its heart it is a separatist movement.<sup>2</sup> Like Nigeria, Sri Lanka is home to many different ethnicities and religions. Despite this large multi-ethnic population, there are two dominant ethnoreligious groups.

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<sup>1</sup> Asoka Bandarage, *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka: Terrorism, Ethnicity, Political Economy* (New York: iUniverse/Authors Choice Press, 2009), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Jerrold M. Post, *The Mind of the Terrorist: The Psychology of Terrorism from the IRA to Al-Qaeda*, 1st ed (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 11.

The largest part of the Sri Lankan population is Sinhalese, who are mostly Buddhist. Tamils make up the minority population and are mostly Hindus. After colonization, the British imported another subset of Tamils from India, known as plantation Tamils, who do not identify with either group but account for only 6% of the population.<sup>3</sup> The split between the two largest ethnic groups is approximately 73% Sinhalese and 12% Tamil.<sup>4</sup> The Sinhalese had for centuries lived in relative peace with the Tamils, until the arrival of the British.

As in Nigeria, the British executed a policy of “divide and rule” in Sri Lanka.<sup>5</sup> The British practiced policies of economic favoritism during their colonial rule giving preference to the Tamil minority and putting them in most of the powerful political positions.<sup>6</sup> Similar to Christians in Southern Nigeria, this allowed the Tamils to prosper and become better educated than the Sinhalese. It also created an elite Tamil class that spread throughout Sri Lanka and then extended a Diaspora to Britain and its other colonies.<sup>7</sup>

The Tamil elite largely governed Sri Lanka until it achieved independence, and this caused them to discriminate against the Sinhalese causing negative feelings.<sup>8</sup> The feelings of injustice spread when the British left and caused the Sinhalese-Tamil conflict to grow worse. After their departure, the British legacy of parliamentary democracy continued and was initially ruled by the better-educated and more politically powerful Tamils.<sup>9</sup> However, the Sinhalese quickly began organizing their own political power structure by forming the Sinhalese Sri Lankan Freedom Party (SLFP) in 1951.<sup>10</sup> A surge of Sinhalese nationalism helped SLFP win the 1956 election. This populist movement

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<sup>3</sup> Eranda Malaka Chandradasa, “Adaptive COIN in Sri Lanka: What Contributed to the Demise of the LTTE?” (Naval Postgraduate School, 2012), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Vernon L.B. Mendis, “Sri Lanka,” in *Counterterrorism Strategies: Successes and Failures of Six Nations*, ed. Yonah Alexander, 1st ed (Washington, D.C: Potomac Books, 2006), 152–89, 152.

<sup>5</sup> Mendis, “Sri Lanka,” 152.

<sup>6</sup> Dan G. Cox, *Terrorism, Instability, and Democracy in Asia and Africa*, Northeastern Series on Democratization and Political Development (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2009), 133.

<sup>7</sup> Bandarage, *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka*, 31.

<sup>8</sup> Brendan O’Duffy, “LTTE: Majoritarianism, Self-Determination, and Military-to-Political Transition in Sri Lanka,” in *Terror, Insurgency, and the State: Ending Protracted Conflicts*, ed. Marianne Heiberg, Brendan O’Leary, and John Tirman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 256–87, 259.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas A Marks, “Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam,” in *Democracy and Counterterrorism: Lessons from the Past*, ed. Robert J. Art and Louise Richardson (Washington, D.C: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007), 483–530, 485.

<sup>10</sup> Chandradasa, “Adaptive COIN in Sri Lanka,” 16.

demanded the government address Sinhala and Tamil social and economic equality issues.<sup>11</sup>

The new SLFP Prime Minister, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, felt beholden to these demands for policies partial to the Sinhala majority and passed the “Sinhala Only Act” making Sinhala the official national language.<sup>12</sup> This policy effectively denied the opportunity of government employment to most Tamils and served as the first catalyst for Tamil secession.<sup>13</sup> It was very effective, as state employment of Tamils fell from 60 percent in 1948 to only 10% in 1970.<sup>14</sup> Beginning in 1956 the Tamils began to see the political system as “winner takes all,” and this encouraged both sides to participate in “extremist outbidding” further deepening the conflict between the groups just like in Nigeria.<sup>15</sup>

To stop Tamil rioting in response to the act, Bandaranaike agreed to work with them toward a peaceful resolution. He paid for this with his life as a Sinhalese Buddhist monk “walked up to the prime minister and emptied a revolver into him at point-blank range.”<sup>16</sup> Bandaranaike’s death marked the first of many political assassinations in Sri Lanka. It also continued a legacy of dynastic leadership as the prime minister’s wife Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the world’s first female Prime Minister, took control.<sup>17</sup>

In 1962, many military members decided that Mrs. Bandaranaike was unfit to rule and planned a coup against her. “The putsch was intended to be bloodless, swift, and precise.”<sup>18</sup> The coup failed, but similar to Nigeria and possibly Colombia, its legacy would endure in the form of a severely weakened military due to mistrust between military and civilian elites. In response, Sirimavo Bandaranaike purged the military of many high ranking officers and cut its funding.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Bandarage, *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka*, 42.

<sup>12</sup> Chandradasa, “Adaptive COIN in Sri Lanka,” 19.; O’Duffy, “LTTE,” 259.

<sup>13</sup> O’Duffy, “LTTE,” 259.; Paul L. Moorcraft, *Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers* (Barnsley, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2013), 6.

<sup>14</sup> Syed Rifaat Hussain, “Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam,” in *Violent Non-State Actors in World Politics*, ed. Kledja Mulaj (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 381–412, 389.

<sup>15</sup> O’Duffy, “LTTE,” 259.

<sup>16</sup> Moorcraft, *Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers*, 6.

<sup>17</sup> Moorcraft, *Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers*, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Moorcraft, *Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers*, 9.

<sup>19</sup> Moorcraft, *Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers*, 9.



Economic difficulties also plagued the Sri Lankan government at this time. “From 1960 to 1977, Sri Lanka spent nearly 10 percent of [gross national product] GNP annually on its welfare programs including the expansion of education.”<sup>20</sup> These programs educated the young and enabled a near-perfect literacy rate, but Sri Lanka still lagged behind Asia in economic growth.<sup>21</sup> Economic sluggishness created a lack of jobs for the newly educated rural youth, and they became restless on both sides of the ethnic divide.

Interestingly, the Sinhala youth were the first to organize a violent movement. The primarily rural, educated, and unemployed Sinhala youth created the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) from Marxist ideology. This movement claimed 10,000 members by 1971, and on 5 April, the JVP attacked police stations and other government installations.<sup>22</sup> The Sri Lankan government declared a state of emergency and the uprising was put down despite the weakened military at a total cost of 10,000-20,000 deaths.<sup>23</sup> This first insurgency pitted underclass Sinhalese youths against upper-class Sinhalese elites. Like in Colombia, severe government repression of the movement “created a culture of political violence” that the Tamil population noted.<sup>24</sup>

In reaction to the brief JVP insurgency, the government passed a new Constitution in 1972. The new Constitution eliminated many of the Tamil minority protections held since independence.<sup>25</sup> The Tamils sensed this would lead to further discrimination and staged peaceful protests in 1972, which the now majority Sinhalese government brutally suppressed.<sup>26</sup> The government’s violent reaction and an increasing disappointment with the democratic process led Tamil leaders to discuss secession. Instead of fighting against their unemployed Tamil youth, the elites enlisted them in a campaign for a separate state.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Bandarage, *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka*, 53.

<sup>21</sup> Bandarage, *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka*, 53.

<sup>22</sup> Bandarage, *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka*, 56.

<sup>23</sup> Ahmed S. Hashim, *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka’s Defeat of the Tamil Tigers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 79.

<sup>24</sup> Hashim, *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka’s Defeat of the Tamil Tigers*, 79.

<sup>25</sup> Moorcraft, *Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers*, 10.

<sup>26</sup> Hussain, “Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam,” 391.

<sup>27</sup> Bandarage, *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka*, 67.; Hashim, *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka’s Defeat of the Tamil Tigers*, 79.



The Tamil elites formed the political party Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) and adopted the Vaddukoddai Resolution demanding their own state called Tamil Eelam.<sup>28</sup> After this resolution, the TULF party began to justify their struggle as a holy war (punitha yutham) against an oppressive Sinhala state.<sup>29</sup> This declaration measurably increased Tamil violence in Northern Sri Lanka. “As violence began to dominate the political atmosphere in the North, the police found it difficult to distinguish between routine maintenance of law and order and legal political activity, and the activities of common criminals and terrorists.”<sup>30</sup>

The police again reacted with a heavy hand that further alienated the Tamil population. Reacting to this government repression, Velupillai Prabhakaran, a charismatic young 18-year-old, formed the LTTE in 1976.<sup>31</sup> Like the Sinhalese JVP movement, it was started by disaffected Tamil youth who eventually became known as “the boys.”<sup>32</sup> In response to the growth of Tamil movements, the Sri Lankan government passed the Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1979. The Act gave state police broad powers, which as in Nigeria, led to indiscriminate arrests, torture, and extra-judicial killings.<sup>33</sup>

Despite these developments, LTTE did not experience initial success because Moderate Tamil’s continued to try to address their problems using the parliamentary process.<sup>34</sup> Until 1983, the LTTE was one of many Tamil separatist groups and could only claim about 30 poorly armed members but they continued to incite unrest.<sup>35</sup> “In the early days of the Tamil Tigers, Prabhakaran was especially enthralled by the model of Che Guevara, seeing ‘guerrilla action’ as the key to mobilizing followers.”<sup>36</sup> Thus, the Tamil minority started using terrorism as a tactic, and like in Colombia they saw themselves as freedom fighters, not terrorists.<sup>37</sup> Although they operated in a Parliamentary Democracy,

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<sup>28</sup> Moorcraft, *Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers*, 13.

<sup>29</sup> Bandarage, *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka*, 67.

<sup>30</sup> Bandarage, *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka*, 69.

<sup>31</sup> Post, *The Mind of the Terrorist*, 12.

<sup>32</sup> Marks, “Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam,” 488.

<sup>33</sup> Nishantha Manage, “Counterinsurgency Principles for Contemporary Internal Conflict” (Master’s Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2012), 15.

<sup>34</sup> Marks, “Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam,” 488.

<sup>35</sup> O’Duffy, “LTTE,” 257.

<sup>36</sup> Post, *The Mind of the Terrorist*, 85.

<sup>37</sup> Marks, “Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam,” 484.

the Tamil minority was not able to generate enough of a political base to achieve their goals peacefully, so they turned to violence instead.

In July 1983, LTTE attacked an army patrol killing one officer and twelve soldiers.<sup>38</sup> Sinhalese nationalists and the army reacted by killing and wounding thousands of Tamils in the capital, Colombo. “At least 400 persons were killed and 100,000 left homeless; another 200,000-250,000 fled to India. Police stood by, and in many cases members of the armed forces participated in the violence.”<sup>39</sup> This ‘spasm of communal terror’ became known as ‘Black July.’ It closely matched the model of Colombia’s La Violencia and signaled the true beginning of the LTTE insurgency.<sup>40</sup> It also secured new recruits, international support, and Prabhakaran’s place as the LTTE’s undisputed leader.

After the events of 1983, the LTTE pursued a violent armed insurgency across Sri Lanka and ended attempts at political reconciliation. Prabhakaran began systematically assassinating moderate TULF leaders to ensure that LTTE was the only Tamil political organization.<sup>41</sup> In total, his campaign of violence lasted for 26 years and killed over 64,000 people.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, the insurgency continued. Due to the previous purges, the Sri Lankan military was not prepared for the level of insurgent activity that ensued.<sup>43</sup> The military was initially beaten back by the insurgency in the 1980’s, known as Eelam War I, but eventually began to recover.<sup>44</sup> In 1987, the government launched Operation LIBERATION, which was led by Major Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who nearly captured Prabhakaran.<sup>45</sup>

Following these government gains, several attempts were made at negotiating a ceasefire. India sent peacekeepers in 1987 but removed them in disgrace after suffering

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<sup>38</sup> Moorcraft, *Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers*, 15.

<sup>39</sup> Marks, “Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam,” 490.

<sup>40</sup> Marks, “Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam,” 490.; Moorcraft, *Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers*, 15.

<sup>41</sup> Hashim, *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka’s Defeat of the Tamil Tigers*, 83.

<sup>42</sup> Hussain, “Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam,” 381.

<sup>43</sup> Moorcraft, *Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers*, 16.

<sup>44</sup> Herman Llorin, “The Effective Use of Elements of National Power in Counterinsurgency: A Study on the Lessons from Sri Lanka 1983-2004 and 2005-2009” (Master’s Thesis, Army Command and General Staff College, 2011), 7.

<sup>45</sup> Moorcraft, *Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers*, 18.

heavy losses to the LTTE in 1990.<sup>46</sup> Not even India could persuade the LTTE leadership to settle for anything less than an independent state.<sup>47</sup> “However, no legitimate Sri Lankan [or Indian] government could ever accede to this demand for a separate state—the demand for one-third of the land and two-thirds of the coast of Sri Lanka for 12.6 percent of the population.”<sup>48</sup>

The LTTE regained strength and in 1990 slaughtered 600 police in a new round of hostilities.<sup>49</sup> This phase, known as Eelam War II, lasted from 1990-1995.<sup>50</sup> The two sides continued to fight both conventionally and unconventionally throughout the decade. “The LTTE continued its terrorist activities in 1997—attacking government troops, hitting economic targets, and assassinating political opponents.”<sup>51</sup> This continuing violence led the United States to declare LTTE as a terrorist organization in 1997 and again in 2003.<sup>52</sup>

During the insurgency, the LTTE perfected the use of terror as a tactic. The group employed suicide bombers including women and children and assassinated two world leaders, Indian Premier Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 and Sri Lankan President Premadasa in 1993.<sup>53</sup> “In the period of 1980 to 2000, the LTTE conducted the largest number of suicide attacks (168), more than triple the number credited to Hezbollah and other groups based in Lebanon (52).”<sup>54</sup>

In order to accomplish these and other large-scale terrorist attacks, the LTTE organized themselves into three main parts: a political wing, an intelligence wing, and a military wing. The LTTE further divided its military wing into four operational organizations: an elite fighting wing (Charles Anthony Regiment), the Sea Tigers, the Air Tigers, and the Black Tigers or suicide unit.<sup>55</sup> The forces and equipment that made up the

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<sup>46</sup> Hashim, *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka's Defeat of the Tamil Tigers*, 98.

<sup>47</sup> O'Duffy, “LTTE,” 262.

<sup>48</sup> Mendis, “Sri Lanka,” 153.

<sup>49</sup> Moorcraft, *Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers*, 27.

<sup>50</sup> Llorin, “The Effective Use of Elements of National Power in Counterinsurgency,” 7.

<sup>51</sup> Mendis, “Sri Lanka,” 165.

<sup>52</sup> Moorcraft, *Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers*, 26.; Mendis, “Sri Lanka,” 165.

<sup>53</sup> Bandarage, *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka*, 1.

<sup>54</sup> James E. Winkates, “Suicide Terrorism,” in *The World's Most Threatening Terrorist Networks and Criminal Gangs*, ed. Michael T. Kindt, Jerrold M. Post, and Barry R. Schneider, 1st ed (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 3–28, 7.

<sup>55</sup> O'Duffy, “LTTE,” 265.

LTTE order of Battle met and consistently outmaneuver the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) military “on land, sea, and air” throughout the 1990’s and 2000’s.<sup>56</sup>

The Tigers developed many different suicide-bombing techniques. The elite Black Tiger suicide force perfected this technique and had a very high success rate.<sup>57</sup> However, there were many other parts to the LTTE insurgency.<sup>58</sup> One large difference between the LTTE and Boko Haram is that they set up political structures within the territory they controlled. “They established structures such as a police force, law courts, postal services, banks, administrative offices, and a television and radio broadcasting station.”<sup>59</sup> These civil developments show significantly more political commitment and ability to govern than Boko Haram. A functioning judiciary also sets it apart from the Colombian FARC that has never established a separate court system.

The period from 1995-2002, known as Eelam War III, marked the climax of the LTTE’s success.<sup>60</sup> At this time, similar to both Boko Haram and the FARC, they held 15,000 square kilometers of territory and claimed to have 30,000 insurgents under arms.<sup>61</sup> The insurgency received money, exceeding US \$200 million annually, and weapons from the large global Tamil Diaspora that now numbered more than one million, and lived mostly in Canada and the United Kingdom.<sup>62</sup> In 2002, they began to negotiate a favorable peace treaty with the Sri Lankan government, which lasted four years until 2006.<sup>63</sup> In 2005, Sri Lanka elected Mahinda Rajapaksa. At his swearing in he “promised to renew peace talks with the LTTE but reiterated his opposition to its demand for an independent state.”<sup>64</sup> After this pronouncement, the treaty did not last long as both sides consistently violated it. After the failure of this four-year cease-fire, Rajapaksa dedicated his Presidency to defeating the LTTE. He greatly expanded and improved training for the

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<sup>56</sup> Stephen L. Battle, “Lessons in Legitimacy: The LTTE End-Game of 2007-2009” (Master’s Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2010), 14.

<sup>57</sup> C. Christine Fair, *Urban Battle Fields of South Asia Lessons Learned from Sri Lanka, India, and Pakistan*, Rand Corporation Monograph Series (Santa Monica, Calif. [u.a.]: Rand, 2004), 29, 37.

<sup>58</sup> Fair, *Urban Battle Fields of South Asia Lessons Learned from Sri Lanka, India, and Pakistan*, 38.

<sup>59</sup> Hussain, “Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam,” 384.

<sup>60</sup> Llorin, “The Effective Use of Elements of National Power in Counterinsurgency,” 7.

<sup>61</sup> Moorcraft, *Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers*, 37.

<sup>62</sup> Chandradasa, “Adaptive COIN in Sri Lanka,” 55, 58.

<sup>63</sup> Hashim, *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka’s Defeat of the Tamil Tigers*, 3.

<sup>64</sup> Mendis, “Sri Lanka,” 185.

Military adding 121,000 new troops between 2006-2009, the period known as Eelam War IV.<sup>65</sup>

“President Mahinda Rajapaksa stated on 12 June 2008 that his government would not resume peace talks with the Tigers until the organization agreed to disarm.”<sup>66</sup> The LTTE refused to do so, and the expanded and now heavily armed Sri Lankan military began to make systematic gains against the LTTE fighters. As the Tigers retreated, they forced hundreds of thousands of Tamil civilians to accompany them into smaller and smaller operating areas.<sup>67</sup> “The escalating war in the North created a situation of ‘humanitarian disaster’ as the LTTE began using the substantial civilian population trapped in Mullaitivu as human shields.”<sup>68</sup> This final stand is known as ‘the cage.’<sup>69</sup> On 17 May 2009, the Sri Lankan military ended the 26-year insurgency by destroying the bunkers where more than 100 senior LTTE leaders, including Prabhakaran, were holed up.

The cage and its spectacular finale ignited a firestorm of condemnation against the Sri Lankan government over its human rights abuses. Indeed, this heated debate continues to this day. However, when the Sri Lankan government defeated LTTE forces in Mullaitivu, 40,000 civilians escaped the battlefield. “In a nationally televised speech, President Mahinda Rajapaksa described the exodus of Tamil civilians from the NFZ [No Fire Zone] as the ‘largest-ever hostage rescue mission in history.’”<sup>70</sup>

Later, in 2011 the United Nations published a report that states that the Sri Lankan government and military were responsible for war crimes during the cage, as they subjected civilian areas and established NFZ’s to aerial and artillery bombardment.<sup>71</sup> The Rajapaksa government continues to deny this, stating that the military respected no fire zones if they had verification that civilians were present.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Moorcraft, *Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers*. (92, 126); Llorin, “The Effective Use of Elements of National Power in Counterinsurgency,” 7.

<sup>66</sup> Hussain, “Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam,” 409.

<sup>67</sup> Battle, “Lessons in Legitimacy,” 30.

<sup>68</sup> Hussain, “Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam,” 411.

<sup>69</sup> Moorcraft, *Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers*, vii.

<sup>70</sup> Hussain, “Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam,” 411.

<sup>71</sup> Hashim, *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka’s Defeat of the Tamil Tigers*, 9.

<sup>72</sup> Hashim, *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka’s Defeat of the Tamil Tigers*, 8-9.

## **Sri Lanka's Strategic Culture**

The Sri Lankan similarities to Nigeria's current struggle are many. When LTTE began, it was ignited by feelings of inequality and economic injustice between the Tamil minority and the Sinhalese government. Elites on both sides manipulated their populations to ensure themselves the most advantageous position. This elite manipulation included TULF riots, police favoritism, and even the attempted coup against Mrs. Bandaranaike. This coup resulted in bad blood between civilian and military elites and a decrease in military readiness at the same time that LTTE was coming to the fore.

This situation is eerily similar to Nigeria's early handling of the Boko Haram crisis. The many long years of war, however, seemed to change Sri Lanka's priorities and uniquely affected their strategic culture. "As the Sinhalese suffered under wave upon relentlessly bloody wave of terrorism, the Sri Lankan government escalated its military operations against the LTTE, taking the stand that it would tackle 'terrorism' before trying to reach a political solution."<sup>73</sup> Some authors, such as Herman Llorin of the U.S. Dept of State, highlight this change by dividing the history of the insurgency into two periods 1983-2004 and 2005-2009.

When the people of Sri Lanka elected Mahinda Rajapaksa in 2005, things changed significantly. He had more political capital to produce a military solution.<sup>74</sup> Following his election, more differences emerge than similarities between Sri Lanka and Nigeria's COIN execution. This section highlights both, and how the Rajapaksa administration turned the tide against the LTTE. In this way, relevant conclusions may be drawn to aid Nigeria in its response against Boko Haram.

### **The Government**

As in Nigeria, the Sri Lankan government was divided based upon its colonial past. The Tamil elites created a new social class in an attempt to maintain their privileged status after independence.<sup>75</sup> At the same time, a rising Sinhalese class of elites also sought increased status. Unlike Colombia or Nigeria, the elite class was cemented by an

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<sup>73</sup> Mendis, "Sri Lanka," 155.

<sup>74</sup> Moorcraft, *Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers*, 127.

<sup>75</sup> Bandarage, *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka*, 34.



official caste system. The Sinhalese elites are called the Goyigama and Tamil elites are the Vellalars.<sup>76</sup> Just as in Colombia, this clash of elites eventually led to the insurgency.

Like many Nigerian leaders, Sri Lankan leaders have tried to extend their terms in office without going to the polls. In 1982, then President Jayawardena called a referendum to extend his government six years and then rigged the vote to stay in power.<sup>77</sup> This vote caused a fracturing amongst political elites and may have led indirectly to the tragedies of Black July. This authoritarian trend is similar to how many of Nigeria's military dictators remained in power during these same years.

Throughout the years, the Sri Lankan leadership also mirrors that of Nigeria in its resolve to retain power.<sup>78</sup> Many related, if not the same, faces return to power at regular intervals. This trend began when Mrs. Bandaranaike took over for her husband and then continued to gain reelection. The trend of dynastic leadership continued when Sri Lanka elected Bandaranaike's daughter, Chandrika Kumaratunga, in 1994.<sup>79</sup> Finally, the Rajapaksa family came into power in 2004 when President Mahinda Rajapaksa appointed his brothers Gotabaya as secretary of defense and Basil as head policy director.<sup>80</sup>

### **The Military**

The Sri Lankan military's capabilities varied greatly throughout the years. In 1983 and continuing through the decade, the military was not prepared for an insurrection.<sup>81</sup> There was no money available to augment troop strength, and civilian elites were still wary of the coup threat from a strong military.<sup>82</sup> The combination of these two issues kept the Sri Lankan military weak during this period.

After the defeat and removal of the Indian peacekeeping force in 1990, many high-ranking Sri Lankan officers were demoralized. They believed "the recruitment and promotion strategies needed to shift toward results-based counter-insurgency strategies had been sacrificed to political patronage."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Hashim, *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka's Defeat of the Tamil Tigers*, 53.

<sup>77</sup> Bandarage, *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka*, 102.

<sup>78</sup> Moorcraft, *Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers*, 10.

<sup>79</sup> Edward J. Amato, "Tail of the Dragon: Sri Lankan Efforts to Subdue the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam" (Master's Thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2002), 21.

<sup>80</sup> Hashim, *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka's Defeat of the Tamil Tigers*, 127.

<sup>81</sup> Marks, "Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam," 487.

<sup>82</sup> Marks, "Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam," 487.

<sup>83</sup> O'Duffy, "LTTE," 274.



During this period, the LTTE continued to achieve many military victories over Sri Lankan forces. One of the most startling defeats, in 2000, shows the lack of coordination and preparedness of Sri Lankan forces. It stunned the Sri Lankan military when 5,000 LTTE defeated a force of 15,000 government troops specifically trained for the mission.<sup>84</sup> This LTTE rout of the elite 53<sup>rd</sup> Division mirrors Boko Haram's rout of multi-national forces during the capture of the Multi-national Joint Task Force (MNJTF) Coordination Base in Baga.<sup>85</sup>

The hard-line Sinhalese factions used these defeats to help Rajapaksa win the next election.<sup>86</sup> As noted earlier, he initially promised to negotiate with the LTTE, but from a position of strength rather than weakness. He, along with many Sinhalese elites, believed they could defeat the LTTE if they increased the size and capability of the military. "The Sri Lankan military had 300,000 combatants when the LTTE was defeated in 2009. Raising a military that large in the midst of conflict was no mean feat; between 2006 and 2009 the military increased in size by almost 80 percent."<sup>87</sup>

Along with augmenting its numbers, the Sri Lankan military also increased its capability. It trained 5,000 special operations forces and engaged the LTTE in both regular and irregular battles.<sup>88</sup> COIN expert David Kilcullen notes, "The Sri Lankan army destroyed them with a combination of conventional and counter-guerrilla tactics that denied the Tigers a comparative advantage while the tempo of operations prevented the Tigers from regrouping."<sup>89</sup> From 2006-2009, the government's military capability and readiness improved, eventually allowing them to defeat the LTTE.

### **The People**

The population did not initially demand an end to the insurgency. This created a situation where the government had little political will to prosecute the LTTE between 1983 and 2004. The GoSL did not sincerely dedicate itself to the defeat of the LTTE, and largely squandered resources on inadvisable campaigns and failed peace processes. The

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<sup>84</sup> Hashim, When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka's Defeat of the Tamil Tigers, 110.

<sup>85</sup> "Boko Haram Seizes Military Base in Borno - Witnesses," News, *Vanguard News*, (January 4, 2015), <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/01/boko-haram-seizes-military-base-borno-witnesses/>.

<sup>86</sup> Hashim, When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka's Defeat of the Tamil Tigers, 127.

<sup>87</sup> Hashim, When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka's Defeat of the Tamil Tigers, 46.

<sup>88</sup> Moorcraft, Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers, 53-4.

<sup>89</sup> Moorcraft, Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers, 54.

Sinhalese public never lost trust in their government, but they did lose trust in the peace process.

The 2001 elections produced a bizarre political event in Sri Lanka. The President, Kumaratunga, and Prime Minister, Wickremesinghe, were elected from different parties.<sup>90</sup> Kumaratunga was a staunch nationalist and favored a military solution, while Wickremesinghe sought a negotiated solution to the LTTE problem.<sup>91</sup> This difference led to many political problems and issues for both military campaigns and peace negotiations. Eventually, Wickremesinghe was unable to unite Sinhalese elites under his plan. The right wing was not willing to negotiate with LTTE viewing any bargain as a significant loss for the government. “Colombo cannot trade Tamil Eelam, i.e. the North and East, for peace, because even if such a Faustian bargain is struck, peace will not be the result.”<sup>92</sup> This nationalist sentiment spread leading to the dissolution of peace talks in 2004, and Wickremesinghe’s subsequent defeat in the next Presidential election by Rajapaksa.<sup>93</sup> The people had spoken.

With Wickremesinghe’s defeat, the solution now focused on force. The Sri Lankan public and elites had spoken together giving Rajapaksa the required political capital to improve the military and defeat the LTTE. “The country would need ideological and political cohesion to understand that this would be a sustained and costly campaign; the leadership believed this cohesion would be provided by the ideological cement of the right wing.”<sup>94</sup>

The Rajapaksa government was also effective in joining the will of Sri Lanka’s people with that of India. They developed a council called the ‘troika’ that enabled a continuous diplomatic dialogue with India. Since many Tamils also live in India, it had an interest in their fate, but also in seeing that they did not overcome the Sri Lankan state that might prompt their own 64 Million Tamils to rebel.<sup>95</sup> Sri Lanka helped Indian politicians assuage their own Tamil population. “It was this ability to satisfy Indian

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<sup>90</sup> Hashim, *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka’s Defeat of the Tamil Tigers*, 116.

<sup>91</sup> Hashim, *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka’s Defeat of the Tamil Tigers*, 116.

<sup>92</sup> Hashim, *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka’s Defeat of the Tamil Tigers*, 16.

<sup>93</sup> Hashim, *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka’s Defeat of the Tamil Tigers*, 117.

<sup>94</sup> Hashim, *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka’s Defeat of the Tamil Tigers*, 127.

<sup>95</sup> Udaya Perera, “Defeating Terrorism through a Politico-Military Strategy: The Sri Lankan Experience” (Master’s Thesis, United States Army War College, 2012), 9, 20.

demands which allowed Colombo largely to ignore Western and UN criticisms at the height of the international furor over civilian deaths in early 2009.”<sup>96</sup>

With India satisfied, domestic political power established, and a powerful military built, the Rajapaksa administration pushed forward with the goal of total LTTE annihilation. “The key to the strategic success of the government forces was the dynamic and ‘joined-up’ political leadership.”<sup>97</sup> This combined political will could serve as an example to Nigeria, and President-elect Buhari’s election may have served as a similar combined popular-elite mandate.

### **Sri Lanka’s COIN Execution**

This section will address Sri Lanka’s application of Thompson’s Five Principles but deal exclusively with material from after Rajapaksa’s election. It is clear that this served as a watershed moment in Sri Lanka’s counterinsurgency. Their COIN execution was poor prior to 2006. As shown above, Sri Lanka struggled with many of the same problems that hinder Nigeria’s COIN execution now. Sri Lanka’s change in the combined popular-elite attitude toward the COIN campaign shows that the population can modify elite decision-making, and thus, strategic culture. Sri Lanka changed its approach by unifying the elites with the population, supporting a well-trained military, and cementing political will.

*1) The government must have a clear political aim: to establish and maintain a free, independent and united country, which is politically and economically stable and viable.* The Rajapaksa government established a clear political aim. It is still unclear if their methods will maintain a united country, but nearly six years after the cage, the insurgency has not reestablished itself. Thus, Sri Lanka conducted the first successful counterinsurgency campaign of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

*2) The government must function in accordance with law.* Despite this victory, the government did not operate totally in accordance with the law. They eschewed intervention and human rights criticism from the West and continued their destruction of the LTTE nearly to its last man and woman. The endless shelling of civilian areas, including hospitals, as documented in the UN report, shows that the government did not

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<sup>96</sup> Moorcraft, Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers, 78.

<sup>97</sup> Moorcraft, Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers, 76.

put the safety of civilians high on the priorities list.<sup>98</sup> It is true that the Tigers extensively used human shields, but government shelling included clearly marked civilian areas, and caused many civilian casualties in the final phase of the war.<sup>99</sup>

3) *The government must have an overall plan.* The government's plan changed after 2006 to one of annihilation. The overall plan focused on defeating the LTTE and their power base comprehensively.<sup>100</sup> A robust military was critical, but Rajapaksa developed and advanced a whole of government approach. Civilian leaders no longer sent mixed signals to the military. The directive was clear, destroy the LTTE.<sup>101</sup> This united civil-military front resulted in increased military effectiveness and presented a strong narrative both internally and externally.

4) *The government must give priority to defeating the political subversion, not the guerrillas.* During the period from 2006-2009, the government addressed the LTTE's political subversion as much as its military capability. The GoSL learned this hard lesson from many years of ineffective peacemaking. Rajapaksa highlighted that the LTTE took children as soldiers and the high taxes they levied on their population. Initially, this approach met with little success because the LTTE had set up separate political and governance processes. There was little Rajapaksa could do to separate civilians from the LTTE. This realization changed his plan to one of slowly recapturing territory. "The Sri Lankan government often provided the salaries of officials in LTTE-controlled territories, it had no visible presence or control over these areas, nor a sustained civilian and governance infrastructure to compete with the LTTE for the 'hearts and minds' of the people. It had to reconquer territory bit by bit. In this context, winning the population could come only after the LTTE was physically eliminated from the territories in question."<sup>102</sup> The restructured Sri Lankan military accommodated this requirement and slowly began to recapture territory from LTTE control.

5) *In the guerrilla phase of an insurgency, a government must secure its base areas first.* Finally, the military secured its base areas and trained to complete more than

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<sup>98</sup> United Nations, *Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka*, March 31, 2011, [http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Sri\\_Lanka/POE\\_Report\\_Full.pdf](http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Sri_Lanka/POE_Report_Full.pdf), ii.

<sup>99</sup> United Nations, *Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka*, ii.

<sup>100</sup> Hashim, *When Counterinsurgency Wins Sri Lanka's Defeat of the Tamil Tigers*, 180.

<sup>101</sup> Hashim, *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka's Defeat of the Tamil Tigers*, 181.

<sup>102</sup> Hashim, *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka's Defeat of the Tamil Tigers*, 43.

one operation at a time. They had previously lacked this capability. “The Sri Lankan army’s inability to conduct more than one operation at a time allowed defending LTTE units to counter attacking government troops effectively.”<sup>103</sup> The development of more concurrent operational ability allowed the Sri Lankan military to conduct complex strategies designed to attack along multiple-axis in order to surprise and obliterate LTTE bases.<sup>104</sup>

The military systematically worked its way from South to North. Unlike past operations, it was able to maintain a consistent front. By pressuring the LTTE, the GoSL military forced them to fight while retreating and denied them the initiative they had historically used to great effect.<sup>105</sup> As the LTTE began to weaken, it inflicted increasing atrocities against its own people. By the end, many Tamils had distanced themselves from the LTTE and even helped GoSL troops with valuable intelligence.

By uniting its population and elites, building and equipping its military, and cementing the political will of the government and its people, Sri Lanka was able to defeat the LTTE separatists after 26 years of war. The victory was not easy and did not come without cost. Some of the difficult situations that the Sri Lankan government encountered over the years rhyme with the problems currently facing Nigeria. In the end, the complete military victory diverges significantly from the COIN experience in Colombia against its FARC separatists, and both cases illustrate different ways to approach this difficult issue in the future. These lessons are addressed in Chapter 6.

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<sup>103</sup> Hashim, *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka’s Defeat of the Tamil Tigers*, 185.

<sup>104</sup> Hashim, *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka’s Defeat of the Tamil Tigers*, 185.

<sup>105</sup> Moorcraft, *Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers*, 133.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

*We thank God for a country rich in human and material resources. And we confess that we have wasted both. But God permits U-turns.*

- Catholic Archbishop of Jos, Nigeria

This thesis seeks to answer the primary research question of how Nigeria's culture influences its counterinsurgency (COIN) operations against Boko Haram. It systematically analyzes Nigeria's history and identifies enduring cultural themes through the classic theoretical lenses of the government, the military, and the people. The thesis then examines two additional case studies and compares these countries' experiences with those of Nigeria to draw lessons for the future.

This chapter examines the case studies with reference to the original research questions. This conclusion focuses on Nigeria but highlights some similarities and differences between each of the other cases to produce relevant policy recommendations for both Nigeria and the United States. Finally, it provides a recommendation for future research.

### Research Questions

The thesis began by putting forward one primary research question and three secondary questions. This chapter uses the evidence provided by the case studies to answer each of these questions. It then offers recommendations.

#### **Question 1: Does Nigeria's culture influence its implementation of successful counterinsurgency operations?**

Based on the evidence presented, the answer to this question is yes, but it depends on how a nation's culture is applied. The term strategic culture provides a useful way to identify the cultural influences on elite decision-making that are most important for any given strategic issue. A nation's political and military elites attempt to make good security decisions from their experiences and contextual understanding of a given situation. Additionally, the people provide legitimacy to these decisions. The will of the



government, the military and the people combine to determine how a nation's strategic decisions are made. The vast number of variables involved is why a nation's strategic culture is difficult to define.

In a broad sense, strategic culture is defined as the contextual elements of a society's overall cultural experience that influence its decision-maker's strategic decisions and its population's acceptance of them. Despite the difficulty in defining this amorphous concept, it bears significant utility.

The in-depth examination of a nation's history allows trends to emerge from amongst the massive amounts of variables. These trends point to certain enduring cultural themes. These enduring themes shape elite behavior and decision-making, and how the population at large views those decisions.<sup>1</sup> This thesis argues that specific themes, as part of a larger framework of strategic culture, provide a valid independent study variable.

Many authors define Nigeria as having a 'coup culture' just like Colombia is viewed as having a 'culture of violence.' In specific micro-situations, these broad generalizations may not hold validity, but when taken across the years of a nation's history, they begin to influence the way policy makers view national strategic decisions. The cultural influences become 'built in' to each decision. As Colin Gray points out, "It is well to remember that virtually whatever the mix of factors that we believe have produced a decision and its consequent strategic behavior, all of the people and the organizations within which they function are more or less distinctively encultured."<sup>2</sup>

Culture shapes decision-making, but it also affects the actions a nation takes after the decision has been made. A relevant example of this is a national leader deciding to allocate more money to defense, while corrupt officials then siphon off the money before it makes the desired impact. Thus, another important research question emerged upon analysis of the cases: it is important to investigate not only *if*, but *how* culture impacts COIN operations.

Since major themes make up a nation's strategic culture and influence elite decision-making, it is important to identify the ones that provide the most influence in

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<sup>1</sup> Max Siollun, *Oil, Politics and Violence: Nigeria's Military Coup Culture (1966-1976)* (New York: Algora Pub, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Colin S. Gray, "Out of the Wilderness: Primetime for Strategic Culture" (Defense Threat Reduction Agency, October 31, 2006), 8.



any given situation. It is also important to understand how those directions are transmitted and implemented within the national structure. For any security problem, political and military elites decide which problems are most important. They then create policy or guidance in an attempt to fix the critical problems.

In the case of COIN operations, policy makers decide if, how, and when to engage; the best strategy to use; and the amount of force to apply. Each country studied in this thesis did all of those things slightly differently, based on their individual cultures, with different results. The case studies further showed the population could help or hinder these operations based on the legitimacy they bestow upon the national government. Through the lenses of the government, the military, and the people this thesis identified three cultural themes that most affected if and how Nigeria implemented COIN operations. They are corruption and elite manipulation, coup proneness and military capability, and a lack of popular trust.

## **Question 2: How does Nigeria's culture impact its leader's decision-making?**

Chapter 3 focuses on the answer to this question. However, in retrospect, the question should read; what are the relevant parts of Nigeria's culture that influence elite decision-making? It is very important to recognize not only the cultural themes, but also how they tie together to influence COIN strategy.

Nigeria is a fractured society with many competing influences. Political elites prey upon societal differences to manipulate the system of government and gain national resources for their ethnic group/tribal area. This elite competition encourages corruption, divides the population across ethnic lines, and eventually creates a weaker less legitimate government. Democracy is not a panacea to this difficulty, as shown by the cases of Colombia and Sri Lanka, which are both old democracies that struggled with this problem.<sup>3</sup> Regardless of the form of government, if the people feel unable to address their grievances peacefully, they will often turn to violence.

In the three cases studied, the civilian government often had poor relations with its military, fearing a possible coup attempt. This mistrust causes civilian leaders to keep the military weak and makes it difficult for the military to respond to emerging threats. A

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<sup>3</sup> Dan G. Cox, *Terrorism, Instability, and Democracy in Asia and Africa*, Northeastern Series on Democratization and Political Development (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2009), 83.

corrupt and biased government normally favors one population group over another. The disaffected group rebels and forms an insurgency. These insurrections are often framed across ethnic, religious, or ideological lines but start from the security fears or economic dissatisfaction of the people.

Finally, an unpopular government with a weak military likely cannot generate enough political will or military strength to protect those people who do not rebel in the face of a strong insurgency. Security forces overreact using brutal tactics, causing the insurgency to grow and the government to lose legitimacy. Thus, to fight an insurgency a government must identify and change the cultural issues that prevent it from building trust and legitimacy with its people. The framework of strategic culture presented in this thesis can help accomplish this.

### **Corruption and Elite Manipulation**

The first theme of corruption and elite manipulation has the largest impact because as described above, it may cause the insurgency to begin. In fractured societies, corruption creates significant imbalances in resources and education. Elites seeking to maximize gain for their group use manipulative measures, including ethnic or religious identities to mobilize parts of the population.<sup>4</sup> All three cases studied included trappings of elite manipulation caused by corruption and relative disparity.

As shown in Chapter 2, Nigeria's culture of elite manipulation and corruption developed from many years of practicing a political patronage system. This theme appears to be the prime driver of many of Nigeria's woes with regards to the Boko Haram insurgency. "That these problems revolve around the divisive use of political, ethnic, religious, and regional groups—in which each tries to improve its position in power and economic revenue at the expense of the other—is why this monograph identified political economic problems as the source of much of Nigeria's instability."<sup>5</sup> Nigeria's experience has similarities with both Sri Lanka and Colombia. When a country's elites focus on personal gain and the gain of their chosen group: ethnic, religious, or otherwise, to the detriment of another group, conflict ensues.

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<sup>4</sup> Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 8.

<sup>5</sup> Clarence J. Bouchat, *The Causes of Instability in Nigeria and Implications for the United States* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute U.S. Army War College Press, 2013), 71.

One of the primary drivers of conflict, evident in all three cases, is economic inequality. In his landmark study of insurgency, *Why Men Rebel*, Ted Robert Gurr, a noted University of Maryland expert on political violence, names this phenomenon “relative deprivation.”<sup>6</sup> When one group sees another prosper at its expense, its members rebel. If a segment of the population views the elites as the problem, then these groups lose trust and rebel. Events in Nigeria, Columbia, and Sri Lanka all followed this general pattern for different reasons.

Groups choose different ways to rebel. In the cases of the Sri Lankan Tamils and Boko Haram, the insurgencies began peacefully with legitimate grievances. It was only after severe over-reaction and brutal repression by government security and military forces that they turned to violence. In Columbia, the political conflict quickly turned violent, resulting in acts of brutality on both sides.

Indeed, one BBC reporter put it this way, “In Muslim-majority countries where national governments and their security forces are viewed as corrupt, predatory and abusive, it is easy for jihadist recruiters to find volunteers.”<sup>7</sup> As shown in the case studies, this definition could be expanded to nearly all forms of insurrection, and is not limited to religious extremists. It extends to any group who views itself as underprivileged relative to other competing groups.

### **Coup Proneness and Military Capability**

The violence unleashed by Boko Haram surprised an unprepared Nigerian military. There are three main reasons why this occurred. First, elite manipulation and corruption appear to be the base cause for the lack of readiness. “Overall, then, elite accommodation in the shadow of the coup d’état can give rise to an internal security dilemma, as power holders, fearful the other side is going to violate its commitment to sharing power, maneuver to defend their privileged positions.”<sup>8</sup>

In the past, when Nigeria’s military began to view the civilian government as too corrupt to govern, it would stage a military coup, and this has occurred seven times since

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<sup>6</sup> Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, 4th ed., Princeton Paperbacks (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1974).

<sup>7</sup> Frank Gardner, “Jihadist Groups around the World,” *BBC News*, June 19, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27930414>.

<sup>8</sup> Philip Roessler, “The Enemy Within: Personal Rule, Coups, and Civil War in Africa,” *World Politics* 63, no. 02 (April 2011): 300–346, 311.

Nigerian independence.<sup>9</sup> When Olusegun Obasanjo took over as a civilian President in 1999, he was aware of the possibility of yet another coup, so he reduced the military's power and funding.<sup>10</sup> Goodluck Jonathan continued this trend until the demonstrated effectiveness of Boko Haram finally forced him to increase military spending.<sup>11</sup> This trend is also evident in Sri Lanka and possibly Colombia.

Second, military elites take their 'piece of the cake.'<sup>12</sup> This embezzlement prevents vital funds and equipment from reaching fielded operational units. Nigerian troops complain of low morale, lack of equipment, and persistent corruption, but Nigeria's security spending has steadily increased.<sup>13</sup> "Many Nigerians conclude that the money has gone to enrich the army top brass and their civilian colleagues."<sup>14</sup> In a shocking letter to Goodluck Jonathan, one senior Nigerian field commander wrote, "The commanders see it as a personal money making venture rather than taking care of men and equipment."<sup>15</sup> This attitude indeed appears a dangerous part of Nigeria's culture.

The third reason is Boko Haram's quick rise took both political and military leaders by surprise. The Nigerian military was not ready for Boko Haram's well-coordinated assaults, and many Nigerian soldiers fled when faced with them. Foreign governments including the United States were also surprised by Boko Haram's rapid evolution.<sup>16</sup> "Initially, Boko Haram incited sectarian violence and attacked Christians

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<sup>9</sup> Max Siollun, *Soldiers of Fortune: Nigerian Politics from Buhari to Babangida 1983-1993* (Abuja, Nigeria: Cassava Republic Press, 2013), 3.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Pizzi, "Nigeria's Undersized, Undertrained Military under Fire," *Al Jazeera America*, May 10, 2014, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/5/10/nigeria-militaryfailure.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Jakkie Cilliers, Julia Schunemann, and Jonathan D Moyer, *Power and Influence in Africa: Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Nigeria and South Africa*, African Futures Paper (Pretoria, South Africa: Institute for Security Studies, March 2015), 19.

<sup>12</sup> Adaobi Tricia, "Sharing Nigeria's Cake," *BBC News*, December 19, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-30447166>.

<sup>13</sup> Caitlin Poling, "Despite Fading Attention, Boko Haram Remains Threat in Nigeria," *US News & World Report*, September 12, 2014, <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/world-report/2014/09/12/despite-fading-attention-boko-haram-remains-threat-in-nigeria>.

<sup>14</sup> Jean Herskovits, "Don't Steal Nigeria's Election," *The New York Times*, March 25, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/26/opinion/dont-steal-nigerias-election.html>.

<sup>15</sup> "Why We Could Not Defeat Boko Haram" - Army Commander Writes A Powerful Letter To President Jonathan," Text, *Sahara Reporters*, (December 15, 2014), <http://saharareporters.com/2014/12/15/why-we-could-not-defeat-boko-haram-army-commander-writes-powerful-letter-president>. This letter is indicative of the level of corruption in the military. The officer further claims that he is afraid for his life, and that if these issues are not remedied it will lead to Boko Haram's eventual defeat of the Nigerian Army.

<sup>16</sup> Hill, Jon, *Providing for National Security: A Comparative Analysis*, ed. Andrew M. Dorman and Joyce P. Kaufman (Stanford, California: Stanford Security Studies, an imprint of Stanford University Press,

with clubs, machetes, and small arms. But by 2010, the group had added Molotov cocktails and simple improvised explosive devices to its arsenal.”<sup>17</sup> This transformation is likely due to outside training and equipment. In 2011, the former Commander of US African Command (AFRICOM), General Carter Ham, noted that intelligence indicated the members of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) were training Boko Haram insurgents.<sup>18</sup>

Regardless of the military’s readiness, their forceful reaction to Boko Haram only increased the violence. Not only were Nigeria’s troops unable to protect civilians, in many cases they attacked them.<sup>19</sup> Unseasoned troops with poor training and equipment often violently overreacted when attacked. These exaggerated responses from the military created significant mistrust between the government, troops, and the local civilians.<sup>20</sup>

Building intelligence on insurgent activities is critical to COIN success. A loss of popular trust may create more insurgents and decreases the population’s willingness to supply valuable intelligence about insurgent operations.<sup>21</sup> Nigeria’s lack of military readiness and discipline leads to military repression rather than protection for the civilian population, continues the cycle of mistrust, and causes the delegitimization of the government.

A lack of military readiness is also evident in the cases of Columbia and Sri Lanka. In Colombia, despite significant recent military strengthening, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) still operates freely in large parts of the country. The Sri Lankan Government, fearing a coup, also kept their military small and underequipped until 2005. Additionally, effective terror campaigns in both countries led to government reprisals against civilians, further alienating their respective populations. Sadly, despite some gains at the negotiating table, Columbia is still caught in this dilemma as President Santos recently ordered airstrikes in retaliation for a FARC attack on 14 April 2015 that

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2014), 228.; Scott Stewart, “Is Boko Haram More Dangerous Than Ever?,” *Stratfor*, December 13, 2012, <http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/boko-haram-more-dangerous-ever>.

<sup>17</sup> Stewart, “Is Boko Haram More Dangerous Than Ever?”

<sup>18</sup> Patrick Meehan and Jackie Speier, “Boko Haram: Emerging Threat to the U.S. Homeland” (U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security: Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, November 30, 2011), 16.

<sup>19</sup> Poling, “Despite Fading Attention, Boko Haram Remains Threat in Nigeria.”

<sup>20</sup> Andrew Walker, “Why Nigeria Has Not Defeated Boko Haram,” *BBC News*, May 14, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-27396702>.

<sup>21</sup> Pizzi, “Nigeria’s Undersized, Undertrained Military under Fire.”

killed 11 soldiers.<sup>22</sup> In Sri Lanka, Rajapaksa's political will after his election in 2005 finally allowed the country to escape this situation.

### **Popular Trust**

Government legitimacy comes from the trust of the people. Just prior to the election, it became obvious the Jonathan administration had lost popular trust in the North. Numerous reasons caused this loss of trust, but high on the list are allegations of corruption and an inability or unwillingness to protect the northern population.<sup>23</sup> Many people, including former President Obasanjo, have criticized Goodluck Jonathan for never completely committing his government to destroying Boko Haram.<sup>24</sup> Jonathan himself "admitted Nigeria's security forces were slow to react to the terror organization's initial advance into the Northeastern part of the country."<sup>25</sup> Initially, Jonathan downplayed the severity of the threat.<sup>26</sup> When this did not work, he internationalized the crisis, calling for help from the West to defeat Boko Haram.

Jonathan's plans did not work out, because Boko Haram grew stronger and the Nigerian population tired of his excuses. The population answered by electing Muhammadu Buhari on March 28, 2015. Buhari ran on a platform of cutting corruption and defeating Boko Haram. Obasanjo broke ranks from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to support Buhari.<sup>27</sup> Obasanjo and other elite defections were unprecedented and certainly influenced the elections.<sup>28</sup> Some elites, including Obasanjo, aligned themselves

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<sup>22</sup> Sara Schaefer Muñoz, "Attack Roils Colombian Peace Talks," *Wall Street Journal*, April 15, 2015, sec. World, [http://www.wsj.com/articles/colombian-farc-rebels-attack-soldiers-killing-10-and-injuring-17-1429116423?mod=WSJ\\_hpp\\_MIDDLENexttoWhatsNewsFifth](http://www.wsj.com/articles/colombian-farc-rebels-attack-soldiers-killing-10-and-injuring-17-1429116423?mod=WSJ_hpp_MIDDLENexttoWhatsNewsFifth).

<sup>23</sup> Stephanie McCrummen, "Nigerian Vote Delay Prompts Suspicion of Election Rigging, Worries of Violence," *The Washington Post*, February 17, 2015, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/nigerians-fear-election-postponement-could-lead-to-violence/2015/02/17/b9b185da-b250-11e4-bf39-5560f3918d4b\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/nigerians-fear-election-postponement-could-lead-to-violence/2015/02/17/b9b185da-b250-11e4-bf39-5560f3918d4b_story.html).

<sup>24</sup> Joe Brock, "Nigeria's Jonathan Told Not to Stand in 2015 by Mentor Obasanjo," *Reuters*, December 12, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/12/us-nigeria-obasanjo-idUSBRE9BB0LF20131212>.

<sup>25</sup> "Nigerian President Vows to Retake Seized Lands from Boko Haram within Month," *Fox News*, March 20, 2015, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2015/03/20/nigerian-president-vows-to-retake-seized-lands-from-boko-haram-within-month/>.

<sup>26</sup> Will Ross, "Boko Haram Crisis in Deadliest Phase," *BBC News*, February 4, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-27823386>.

<sup>27</sup> John Campbell, "A Way Out of Nigeria's Political Crisis?," *Council on Foreign Relations - Africa in Transition*, February 18, 2015, <http://blogs.cfr.org/campbell/2015/02/18/a-way-out-of-nigerias-political-crisis/>.

<sup>28</sup> John Campbell, "Why Were Nigeria's Presidential Elections Postponed?," *Council on Foreign Relations - Africa in Transition*, February 9, 2015, <http://blogs.cfr.org/campbell/2015/02/09/why-were-nigerias-presidential-elections-postponed/>.



with the will of the people. The fractured elite allowed an election with less manipulation to occur. According to the former US Ambassador to Nigeria, John Campbell, these defections “would make it difficult for Jonathan and the PDP to rig the presidential elections.”<sup>29</sup>

In accordance with Campbell’s prediction, Nigeria’s elections were seen as free and fair and represented the first victory for an opposition party.<sup>30</sup> Buhari’s election appears as a public mandate for the defeat of Boko Haram. This mandate significantly increases Buhari’s political capital much like Rajapaksa’s election did in Sri Lanka. If this translates as a popular demand to end the insurgency, it will improve Nigeria’s operational COIN success.<sup>31</sup>

### **Question 3: What makes COIN operations successful?**

Each case study addresses this question by using Thompson’s five questions. It is important to note the main ideas that emerged from that analysis here. The Colombia and Sri Lanka cases demonstrate two separate models for defeating an insurgency. The first causes the insurgency to lose local support, and the second defeats it militarily.<sup>32</sup> The governments in both case studies mixed these methods, but each relied more heavily on one option than the other.

Colombia continues to use mostly an approach aimed at debasing the FARC’s local support and trying to negotiate a settlement. The FARC still control a large sanctuary in the country making it difficult to defeat with military action alone. Sri Lanka started with this method but ended the insurgency with a more military-based strategy. The successful mixture of these two main strategies depends on the context and environment of the government, the people, and the insurgency over time.<sup>33</sup>

It is an almost universally stated COIN truism that when an insurgency loses local support, it will inevitably end. Thus, the counterinsurgents goal is to gain legitimacy by

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<sup>29</sup> Campbell, “A Way Out of Nigeria’s Political Crisis?”

<sup>30</sup> Jacob Zenn, “Nigeria: From One Campaign to the Next - Buhari and the Battle Against Boko Haram,” *African Arguments*, April 7, 2015, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201504100681.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Muhammadu Buhari, “Muhammadu Buhari: We Will Stop Boko Haram,” *The New York Times*, April 14, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/15/opinion/muhammadu-buhari-we-will-stop-boko-haram.html>.

<sup>32</sup> Russell Croy, “How Do Insurgencies End?,” *Small Wars Journal*, October 10, 2014, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/printpdf/16350>.

<sup>33</sup> Croy, “How Do Insurgencies End?”



practicing selective violence against insurgents and protecting and isolating civilians from them.<sup>34</sup>

COIN authors also argue that an insurgency needs three things to operate: “people, money, and guns.”<sup>35</sup> It is far easier to defeat a closed system than an open system. Thus, removing outside support also plays a role in ending an insurgency.

Finally, another way is to attrit and then completely annihilate the insurgent forces. If accomplished incorrectly, however, this strategy can backfire. The key is to practice what Kalyvas calls selective violence rather than indiscriminate violence.<sup>36</sup> Anti-terrorism expert Audrey Kurth Cronin, adds the government must do this without “catalyzing a larger countermobilization by that community or demobilizing the government’s own support.”<sup>37</sup> Selective violence helps the government to regain or maintain its legitimacy in the eyes of the people.

#### **Question 4: Can this understanding help the Nigerian Government defeat Boko Haram?**

Identifying the themes that make up Nigeria’s strategic culture and aligning them with the actions that make counterinsurgency operations successful will help Nigeria defeat Boko Haram. Fortunately, President-elect Buhari seems to understand these things already. He laid out his strategy for defeating the insurgency in a New York Times Op-Ed. Known for his direct approach to things; Buhari is wasting no time correcting the problems he saw in the Jonathan administration’s counterinsurgency approach. It is too early to determine if he will garner enough political support to accomplish his objectives, but his strategic approach to the problem is promising and in-line with the recommendations of this thesis.

#### **Recommendations**

Since the Nigerian election, public attention in the West has shifted from Boko Haram. Despite this dearth of reporting, the insurgency is not over. As seen in Colombia

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<sup>34</sup> David Galula, *Pacification in Algeria, 1956-1958*, Advanced Research Project Agency (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2006), <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG478-1.html>, 23.

<sup>35</sup> Eranda Malaka Chandradasa, “Adaptive COIN in Sri Lanka: What Contributed to the Demise of the LTTE?” (Naval Postgraduate School, 2012).

<sup>36</sup> Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 388.

<sup>37</sup> Audrey Kurth Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011), 205.

and the pre-Rajapaksa years in Sri Lanka, insurgencies can fester for years increasing and decreasing in intensity, but never completely dying out.

If Nigeria mishandles its COIN response, the possibility exists that this insurgency will develop into a long-term struggle like those in Colombia and Sri Lanka. To avoid this, Nigeria requires a multi-dimensional strategy that eliminates Boko Haram's radical elements, but also addresses the root causes by appealing to moderate northern elements and incorporating them back into Nigerian society. The recommendations reflect this type of sustained, comprehensive approach.<sup>38</sup>

## **Nigeria**

First, the Nigerian government must regain legitimacy in the North. It can accomplish this goal by rebuilding trust. In the short term, this requires better protection for civilians. According to Kalyvas' model of selective violence, as trust rebuilds, more intelligence will become available, and this allows selective targeting of insurgents.<sup>39</sup>

More intelligence will enable a decapitation strategy. Boko Haram is very dispersed, and many of its soldiers are young. If the upper and mid-level leaders are killed, especially Shekaku, it is possible the insurgency will crumble. Much like Sri Lanka's Prabhakaran, Boko Haram's leader, Shekaku, is a violent yet charismatic leader. If the government can regain popular trust, it may be able to target him directly, leading to the demise of the group.

The Nigerian government needs to acknowledge the insurgency has become a regional issue.<sup>40</sup> It needs to put full support into the multi-national joint task force. For the most part, Nigeria has denied Chad's troops the opportunity to pursue Boko Haram militants into Nigeria, and the fighting is not well coordinated.<sup>41</sup> Nigeria must remedy

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<sup>38</sup> Julia McQuaid and Patricio Asfura-Heim, *Rethinking the U.S. Approach to Boko Haram: The Case for a Regional Strategy*, Center for Stability and Development (Arlington, VA: CNA Analysis and Solutions, February 2015), <http://www.cna.org/research/2015/rethinking-us-approach-boko-haram>, 12. This report published a table including COIN best practices. These match harmoniously with the argument developed in this thesis. This section uses McQuaid and Asfura-Heim's best practices as a general framework to propose recommendations to Nigeria.

<sup>39</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 209.

<sup>40</sup> Yemi Adebawale and Senator Iroegbu, "Nigeria: Real Battle to Dislodge Boko Haram Begins in March," *This Day*, February 21, 2015, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201502231874.html>.

<sup>41</sup> Adam Nossiter, "Nigerian Army Noticeably Absent in Town Taken From Boko Haram," *The New York Times*, March 20, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/21/world/africa/nigerian-army-noticeably-absent-in-town-taken-from-boko-haram.html>.

this lack of coordination, and it appears Buhari is ready to accept help from his neighbors while fully accepting responsibility for Nigeria's protection.<sup>42</sup>

Nigeria should bolster the strength and readiness of its military. President-elect Buhari needs to ensure resilient relations between civilian and military elites. The popular democratic response to the 2015 election and Buhari's military background should give him the political capital amongst Nigeria's elite to ensure that no coup will occur. Building this trust will enable him to strengthen the military and provide sufficient training and equipment. A ready military will enable punishing yet selective kinetic strikes and a robust defensive capability against Boko Haram. The Nigerian government should also engage both the United Kingdom and the United States for help with training, equipment, and advisement.

Nigeria can also minimize outside support for the insurgents. Again, this requires a regional approach. Boko Haram gets most of its money by stealing and extorting from local families.<sup>43</sup> Protecting the population should help to alleviate this. Additionally, it steals most of its guns, ammunition, and heavy equipment from Nigerian police and troops.<sup>44</sup> The Nigerian government must provide enough soldiers and equipment to withstand any attack by Boko Haram.

Finally, Nigeria must address the root causes of the insurgency. Distinguished experts on the causes of civil war, James Fearon and David Laitin, "have argued that state weakness marked by poverty, a large population, and instability, as well as a rough terrain, are key conditions that favor insurgency."<sup>45</sup> Controlling these items is difficult, but a strong government in Nigeria could ensure an even distribution of national wealth, an improved education system in the North, and the inclusion of all ethnicities into the political process.

As discussed earlier, Nigeria's youth bulge, combined with a lack of work and relative economic deprivation, create fertile ground for Boko Haram recruitment.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Buhari, "We Will Stop Boko Haram."

<sup>43</sup> Farouk Chothia, "Boko Haram Crisis: How Have Nigeria's Militants Become so Strong?," *BBC News*, January 26, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-30933860>.

<sup>44</sup> Chothia, "Boko Haram Crisis."

<sup>45</sup> Kledja Mulaj, ed., "Non-State Actors: Exploring Their State Relations, Legitimation, and Operationality," in *Violent Non-State Actors in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 1–25, 13.

<sup>46</sup> Cox, *Terrorism, Instability, and Democracy in Asia and Africa*, 207.

Corruption is very difficult to combat because it is essentially institutionalized. However, President-elect Buhari is known for his anti-corruption stance, and at a minimum, he has the power to mitigate its impact on the military and minimize the inequality amongst the population.

As Nigeria's government works to reintegrate northerners, it must be careful not to grant universal amnesty to Boko Haram insurgents, as it did with the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) rebels. Colombia has made this mistake in the past. "The result has been leaving in place an incentive to continue or start new insurgent movements because there is no punishment attached to the many acts of terrorism inflicted on the society by the combatants."<sup>47</sup> Reintegration must be a long slow process that punishes those guilty of terrorism and other crimes against civilians.

### **United States**

The United States could have a part to play. First, it needs to understand the insurgency, and hopefully, this thesis and others like it aid that process. Despite his rhetoric about wanting US help and claims that he has been asking for it since 2014, President Jonathan was reluctant to accept it.<sup>48</sup> The US, specifically the United States Air Force (USAF), upon being asked, should provide more airborne Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance platforms. The US could also supply special operations advisors to help train Nigeria's troops, as it has done in the past. These advisors can help to influence the multi-national joint task force, ensuring it has proper leadership and coordination.

The US already helps Chad do these things, but could become more involved in Nigeria with an agreeable government. In the aftermath of the Chibok kidnapping, the US sent a "team of 16 people from various USG agencies" when requested by the Jonathan administration. The US also worked to determine what intelligence products it could share with Nigeria. "The US maintains a drone base in Chad, from which it conducts surveillance flights to monitor Boko Haram. It has provided training and some equipment

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<sup>47</sup> James Zackrison, "Colombia," in *Combating Terrorism: Strategies of Ten Countries*, ed. Yonah Alexander (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 147.

<sup>48</sup> Neanda Salvaterra And Drew Hinshaw, "Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan Wants U.S. Troops to Fight Boko Haram," *Wall Street Journal*, February 13, 2015, sec. World, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/nigerian-president-wants-u-s-troops-to-fight-boko-haram-1423850893?mod=e2tw>.

to the Nigerian military, including \$80 million of such support last year alone.”<sup>49</sup> The U.S. has long supported Nigerian forces. According to the US embassy in 2011, “We have had a mil-mil relationship with the Nigerians for decades, principally supporting their peacekeeping efforts in Africa.”<sup>50</sup> This relationship has dwindled over the past few years, but could be rekindled.

The USAF can also provide short-range airlift, a desperately needed capability. Nigeria could then purchase short-range platforms such as the C-27 Spartan, and the USAF could help train Nigerian pilots in these missions as it does in Afghanistan. Colonel James Hall, a retired British officer and former adviser to the Nigerian military, identifies Nigerian military needs as transportation and communications equipment.<sup>51</sup> The Nigerian military communicates mostly by mobile telephone so when the system goes down they have little ability to provide command and control.

The US and UK could also work together through the United Nations to build a better response capability within the multi-national joint task force. Nigeria’s poor human rights record is the main obstacle to more US involvement. Buhari does not have the best human rights record so the US must monitor this situation carefully.<sup>52</sup> The violation of human rights legally restricts the US from selling Nigeria advanced arms. “The USG does not want to be responsible for empowering units known for abuse. In order to prevent this from happening, there are two US laws, referred to as the ‘Leahy Law,’ that require units in countries known to commit human rights abuses to be vetted through a DOD-DOS process before receiving US training and equipment.”<sup>53</sup> Congress would have to waive this law to provide Nigeria with arms, but it could legally provide them to neighboring countries such as Chad and Cameroon now. Hopefully, a strengthened military under Buhari would choose selective violence and minimize human rights violations in their prosecution of Boko Haram.

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<sup>49</sup> Hinshaw, “Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan Wants U.S. Troops to Fight Boko Haram.”

<sup>50</sup> David Smith and Monica Mark, “‘Nigerian Taliban’ Threat Prompts US Military Training,” *The Guardian*, November 8, 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/nov/08/nigerian-taliban-us-boko-haram>.

<sup>51</sup> “Boko Haram Crisis: Is the Nigerian Army Failing?,” *BBC News*, February 4, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31046809>.

<sup>52</sup> John Campbell, *Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 85.

<sup>53</sup> McQuaid and Asfura-Heim, *Rethinking the U.S. Approach to Boko Haram*, 28.

A significant US presence and intervention may make the problem worse by inciting more foreign insurgents to travel to Nigeria. With this in mind, the US needs to decide how dedicated it is to this problem, and how much support it should provide Nigeria.

### **Future Research**

This thesis aimed to identify relevant cultural themes that fit into the framework provided by the term strategic culture and thereby affect the success of Nigeria's COIN strategy. One theme identified in Nigeria's culture was corruption caused by elite manipulation. Obviously, deeply embedded inequality and corruption are very difficult problems to solve. According to Robert Gurr's Polity IV project, Nigeria is categorized as an open Anocracy due to these problems.<sup>54</sup> Meaning that due to significant elite interference in the political process, it is in a transition stage between Autocracy and Democracy. The 2015 election results may help change this status. A study of how this landmark election will change the population's view of its government and how that will impact Nigeria's culture would be valuable. This study could include how other nations have made successful transitions into democracy, and how this affected their internal and external use of force.

Nigeria continues to struggle with its fractious society, and ongoing insurgency, but the unprecedented election of Muhammadu Buhari has opened a 'policy window' of opportunity to him.<sup>55</sup> This event could signal a 'tipping point' in Nigeria's fight against Boko Haram.<sup>56</sup> Hopefully, this thesis and its framework help identify the problem, make comparisons with other long-duration insurgencies, and explain the importance of addressing this critical problem now.

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<sup>54</sup> Monty G. Marshall and Ted Robert Gurr, "Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2013," *Authority Trends, 1960-2013: Nigeria*, 2014, <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/nig2.htm>.

<sup>55</sup> John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, Updated 2nd ed, Longman Classics in Political Science (Boston: Longman, 2011), 203.

<sup>56</sup> Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, 1st Back Bay pbk. ed (Boston: Back Bay Books, 2002).



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